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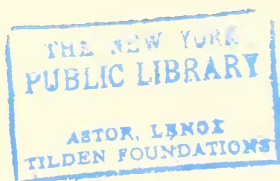


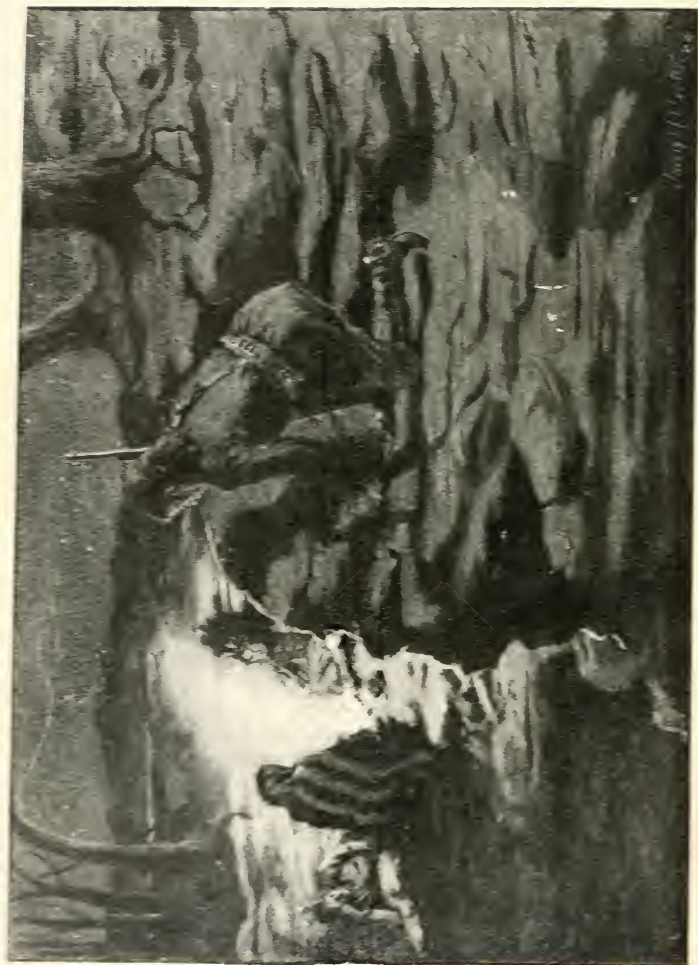
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CARL DISCOVERS THE INDIAN HORSE THIEVES.

Carlton
H. S. 54.
CARL

THE TRAILER

BY

HARRY CASTLEMON *For Luck 4*

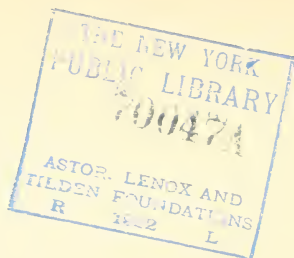
AUTHOR OF "THE GUNBOAT SERIES," "ROCKY MOUNTAIN SERIES,"
"WAR SERIES," ETC.

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CARL, THE TRAILER.

CHAPTER I.

GETTING READY FOR THE HUNT.

“SO you are nearly out of fresh meat, are you? Do your men get that way often?”

“Yes, sir. These Pawnee scouts can’t eat like white men. When they have any fresh meat on hand they eat all they can, and when it is gone they look to us for more.”

“Well, I suppose I shall have to send an officer out after some. I think I will try Lieutenant Parker. He has been a pretty good young officer since he has been out here, and perhaps it will do him some good to get a little exercise. Orderly, send Parker here.”

This conversation took place between Col. Dodge, the commander of a small fort situ-

ated on the outskirts of the Standing Rock Agency, and his commissary, who had come in to report the condition of the garrison in regard to supplies. There was plenty of everything except fresh meat, and their Pawnee scouts were already grumbling over their diminished supply. Their commander must send out and get some more. Game of all kinds was abundant a short distance back in the mountains, but it was a little dangerous to send a body of troops out there. Something out of the usual order of things had happened within a few miles of Fort Scott, and there was every indication that Sitting Bull, who had settled down at Standing Rock Agency since he came from Canada, was trying to set his braves against the whites and drive them from the country. The thing which started this trouble was the Ghost Dance—something more of which we shall hear further on.

The orderly disappeared, and presently a quick step sounded in the hall, the door opened, and Lieutenant Parker entered.

It was no wonder that this young officer had proved himself a good soldier, for he came

from West Point, and it was plain that he could not be otherwise. To begin with, he was handsome above most men of his rank, with a well-knit figure, and eyes that looked straight into your own when he was speaking to you. He stood among the first five in his class, and upon graduation received his appointment to the —th Cavalry at Fort Scott. Of course he found army life dull, compared with the life he had led at the Point, but that made no difference to him. If he lived he would in process of time become a major-general, and that was what he was working for. He first saluted the colonel, then removed his cap and waited for him to speak.

“Well, Parker, you find this army life slow, don’t you?” said he.

“Sometimes, sir,” said the lieutenant with a smile. “One does not get much chance to stir around.”

“You know the reason for it, I suppose?”

“Yes, sir. Sitting Bull is going to make trouble.”

“He has not made any trouble yet, and I

propose to send you out in the presence of all his warriors."

"Very good, sir," replied Parker.

Most young officers would have opened their eyes when they heard this, but it did not seem to affect Lieutenant Parker one way or the other. He knew his commander had some good reason for it, and with that he was satisfied.

"Yes," continued the colonel, "I propose to give you command of a dozen men, including a sergeant, two corporals, two wagons and a guide, and send you into the mountains after some fresh meat. We got some only a little while ago, but the Pawnee scouts have eaten it all up."

Lieutenant Parker grew interested at once. He was a pretty fair shot for a boy of his age, and had brought his Winchester from the States, together with a fine horse that his father had given him; but he put his rifle upon some pegs in his room, and there it had remained ever since he had been at the fort. He looked at it once in a while and said to his room-mate :

"That Winchester can rust itself out before I will have a chance to use it. I was in hopes I should have a chance to try it on a buffalo before this time."

"It seems to me that you have not read the papers very closely," said Lieutenant Randolph, "or you would have found out that the buffalo have all but disappeared. There is only one small herd left, and they are in Yellowstone Park, where they are protected by law."

"But there are antelope on the plains," said Parker.

"Yes, and maybe you will have a chance at them by the time old Sitting Bull gets over his antics. It won't do for a small company of men to go out on the plains now. The Sioux are too active."

"Well, the colonel knows best," said Parker with a sigh. "I have asked him twice to let me go out but he has always refused me, and now I shall not ask him again."

But now the colonel seemed to have thought better of it, and was going to send him out to try his skill on some of the big game that

was always to be found in the foothills. He was delighted to hear it, and his delight showed itself in his face.

"Do you think you can get some meat for us?" asked the colonel with a smile. "You appear to think that you are going to have an easy time of it."

"No, sir; I suppose we shall have a hard time in getting what we want; but if you can give me a guide who will show me where the game is, I believe I will have some for you when I come back."

"How will Carl, the Trailer, do you?"

"I don't know, sir. I have often seen him about the fort, but have never spoken to him."

"We will put two boys at the head of the expedition, and see how they will come out with the captain who went out two weeks ago," said the colonel, turning to his commissary. "Sit down, Parker. Orderly, tell Carl, the Trailer, that I want to see him."

The orderly opened the door and went out, and Lieutenant Parker took the chair toward which the colonel waved his hand. While they were waiting for the guide the officer

proceeded to give his subordinate some instructions in regard to the way he was to conduct himself in case the Sioux molested him. Of course he could not expect, with the few men that the colonel was going to give him, to stand against the whole body of the Sioux, but he could run, holding a tight rein in the meantime, until he came to a clear spot free from gullies and underbrush, and there he could dismount his command and make the best fight possible. If he wasn't back at the fort in a week a company would be sent out to look for him; but suppose he was found dead and scalped? Lieutenant Parker thought of this, but his ardor did not abate in the least. He had come out on the plains to take just such risks as this, and he supposed that it was the orders every young officer received when he was about to encounter the Indians for the first time. But he did not believe that the Sioux were going to get after him. They had enough to do with the Ghost Dance to prevent them paying attention to anything else.

“But I hope they will keep clear of you

until you come back," said the colonel. "The first thing you do, go to work and fill up one of those wagons with game and send it to the fort with six men, commanded by the corporal. He knows the way and won't get lost. After that, you stay with the other six men until you fill up the other wagon, and then come home yourself."

Just then another step was heard in the hall, and the door opened to admit Carl, the Trailer. Parker told himself that he was glad that Carl was going with him as guide, for he would have opportunity to talk to him, and perhaps he might find out where he got that curious name.

Carl was young in years—he did not look to be a day older than Lieutenant Parker—and the years of toil and hardship he had seen on the plains, if indeed he had seen any of them, did not mar his face as they had that of older scouts. He was as straight as an arrow, bore a frank and honest face, and his blue eyes, as he turned them from one to another of the occupants of the room, did not express the least surprise that he had been

called upon to go on a dangerous mission. He supposed that the colonel wished to send him to Standing Rock Agency with dispatches, and he was ready to take them. It was something that he had frequently been called upon to do, and he had always returned in safety. He did not look like a plainsman, for he was dressed in a suit of moleskin, as fine a pair of boots as money could buy, and a sombrero, which he removed as he entered the room.

"Here I am, colonel," said he cheerily, "and all ready to go on to Fort Yates, if necessary. What do you want of me?"

"Are you acquainted with Lieutenant Parker?" asked the colonel in reply.

"I have seen him, but I don't know him," answered the guide.

"Well, here he is. Lieutenant, this is Carl, the Trailer, the name by which you will probably know him, but his name is Preston."

The lieutenant got up from his chair and extended his hand to the guide, but was not very well pleased with the reception he met. Carl took his hand, gave it a little squeeze and dropped it, and then turned his

face toward the colonel and waited for him to go on and explain what he wanted done. There were two things about it, Lieutenant Parker told himself: Carl was not favorably impressed with his appearance; and, furthermore, he could not have been raised in that country all his life, for he used as fine language as he did himself.

"Carl, I want you to guide twelve men to the foothills and get some fresh meat for us," continued the colonel.

At this the guide turned again and gave the lieutenant a good looking over. It seemed to be the first time that he had taken a fair view of him. He surveyed him all over, from his boots to his head, gazed straight into his eyes for a moment, and then turned his attention to the colonel again.

"Do you think the lieutenant will do?" asked the officer.

"Oh, yes; provided a grizzly don't get after him and tear him up," replied the guide with indifference.

"But you must not let a grizzly do that. If you start now you can easily reach Lost

River, can't you? Very well. You may get ready, and the commissary will find the wagons and mules for you and twelve hunters. Be sure you pick out the best shots in the command."

The commissary and the guide went out, and Parker was alone with the colonel. The officer looked into the lieutenant's face as he took his chair again, and could not repress a smile at the expression of disappointment he saw there.

"Well, Parker, what do you think of Carl, the Trailer?" he asked.

"I think more of him than he does of me, sir," replied the lieutenant. "He doesn't hold me in very high estimation as a hunter."

"Neither do I," said the colonel.

Parker did not know what reply to make to this. He looked at the colonel, and then his gaze wandered down to the floor.

"You must do something to prove yourself a good shot and a man who can bag game every time he sees it," continued the officer. "Do your part of the work faithfully, and I warrant he will come back with a different opinion of you."

"But, colonel, that fellow was never born and raised in this country."

"What makes you say that? On account of his language? He was born in this country, about forty miles from here. His father was a Harvard graduate."

"Oh, that accounts for it, sir. Has this Carl, the Trailer, ever been to school?"

"Never a day in his life. He despised school and everything connected with it, and longed for horses, guns and excitement. I guess he has seen plenty of it. His father died about two years ago, and he left his ranch in charge of a foreman and has been on duty at this post ever since."

"He does not dress at all like a plainsman, sir."

"Oh, Carl is rich. I don't suppose he knows how many cattle there are, running loose on the plains, that bear his brand. But if all reports are true he is not going to be allowed to keep his money for a great while. There are some fellows about here who wouldn't be any too sorry to see him deliver up his life, for then the property would come

into their possession. But he bears a charmed existence in spite of all they can do. I guess I have told you everything I could think of, and you may as well get ready and go on. Remember, I want you to fill up one of the wagons at once and send it to me in command of a corporal. I shall look for you to come back in safety at the end of a week, if you don't get all the game you want before that time, and I shall expect to hear a good account of you."

The colonel arose to his feet, and the lieutenant, taking this as a hint that he wanted the interview brought to a close, shook hands with him and hurried out.

CHAPTER II.

CARL, THE TRAILER.

AT the door Lieutenant Parker found the officer who was acting as commissary of the post waiting for him.

"I have not picked out your men yet," said he. "I didn't know but you had some men in your own company you would be glad to have along with you."

"I have indeed," said the lieutenant. "I would be obliged to you if you would let Sergeant Leeds go with the hunters to take command of them. As for the two corporals, Mason and Smith will do as well as anybody. As for the hunters——"

He thought for a moment, and then named over twelve of the best shots in the company whom he would like to have with him, and then hastened off to get his hunting equipments together and to saddle his horse, for be it known that it was against the law for

an officer to hire an enlisted man to take care of his stock. He was obliged to act as his own servant or his work would not be done. He ran into his own room, where Lieutenant Randolph was lying on the bed reading a novel, and began taking his Winchester down from the pegs on which it had hung for so long a time.

"Come here, old fellow," said he gleefully. "We are going to see what you can do now. If you don't shoot everything you are pointed at——"

"Has the colonel given you permission to go hunting?" asked the lieutenant in surprise.

"Yes, sir. He sent for me on purpose to tell me to go to the foothills and shoot some big game for the post," said Parker. "I guess those Pawnee gluttons must be pretty nearly out."

"Now I don't see why it is that I don't get an invitation to go on such an expedition as this," said Lieutenant Randolph, flinging his book across the room and stretching himself out with his hands under his head. "I have always tried to be a good and loyal soldier of the Republic——"

“Always?” said Parker, with a sly look at his companion. “When you appeared on dress parade with your horse’s legs covered with dust, and your necktie all adrift instead of being tied up as it ought to be, did you think you were setting a proper example to the men?”

“But the colonel did not say anything about it.”

“No, but the captain did, and of course the colonel knew it. The captain gave you something of a blessing, too, judging by the looks your face wore when you came into this room.”

Lieutenant Randolph did not say anything, for he knew it was all true. They were just as strict in the army where there were no visitors to see them as they were at West Point. He had come out there to join the —th Cavalry at the same time Parker did, and his room-mate ranked him just about five minutes; that is, Parker’s appointment was signed before Randolph’s was. But the same habits that clung to him at West Point followed him here. He was just a moment too

late for everything, and the colonel thought that keeping him in while the other officers were allowed privileges would in time cure him of his bad habits. He lay on his bed and watched Parker while he filled his belt with cartridges and hastily put some extra clothes into a small valise which he intended to take with him, and then he went out to saddle his horse.

By the time Lieutenant Parker emerged from the stable the expedition was ready to start. The drivers were in their seats on the wagons, and the twelve hunters, with Sergeant Leeds at their head, were waiting for him. Carl, the Trailer, was there, superbly mounted, and when Lieutenant Parker led his horse up, he surveyed the animal with rather a critical eye. The conclusion he came to was not very favorable to Parker's Kentucky thoroughbred. He said to himself that if the two horses were ever put into a race he was sure that his own mustang would win every time.

Parker's rifle and valise were on the porch, and it did not take him long to deposit them in one of the wagons; then he saluted his su-

periors, several of whom had gathered on the steps beside the colonel to witness his departure, kissed his hand to some of the second lieutenants, and swung himself into the saddle. "Forward!" said the sergeant, and in a few minutes more the little train had passed through the gate and wended its way toward the foothills, which lay all of thirty miles away. Then Parker turned his attention to Carl, the Trailer, who rode by his side in the rear of the wagons.

If he was an object worthy of admiration to Lieutenant Parker while he was afoot, he demanded extra admiration now that he was on horseback. His sombrero sat jauntily over his long, curly hair, his Winchester was confined by a strap at his back, leaving his hands, which were protected by gauntlet gloves, free to manage his horse, and the face he turned toward Lieutenant Parker was as handsome as a girl's. The two boys looked at each other in silence for a moment, and then the lieutenant said :

"You seem rather young to go on an expedition like this."

"And so do you," returned Carl. "When the colonel sent for me I had made up my mind to do something desperate. I was sure he was going to send me to Fort Yates with dispatches; but when I found that he was going to send me out after game—why, I thought he would send a man with me; that's all."

"Then I don't suppose I shall fill the bill," said Parker, modestly. "I lack some years yet of being a man. What do you expect me to do while you fellows are hunting?"

"Oh, you will loaf around the camp bossing the job, eat more than your share of the grub, and when we get back to the fort you will brag as loudly as though you had done something. If we should accidentally kill a bear, you would appropriate the hide and proudly exhibit it as your own. That is the way the young officers always do."

"Then you have had some experience with them?"

"Certainly. I remember shooting a bull elk while out once with a second lieutenant, who offered me twenty-five dollars if I would

say that he killed the elk himself. You know the man. You have seen him every day."

"I cannot think who you refer to, for I don't know of any officer who has got a pair of antlers in his room."

"Oh, he has sent them home."

"Then I am glad I don't know him, and I shall make no effort to find him out."

Carl, the Trailer, looked at Parker with a smile of disbelief on his face.

"I mean it," said the lieutenant earnestly. "I should not care to associate with any man who could tell a lie like that."

"Maybe the colonel knows it, and that was the reason he selected you to command this expedition."

"I don't know why he selected me unless it was because I have always tried to do my duty. This is his way of telling a young officer that he is satisfied with him. Would you mind telling me how you came by your odd name—Carl, the Trailer?" added Parker, who was anxious to change the subject of the conversation.

“It was nothing at all, only just because I happened to do my business as I ought to have done it,” said Carl, “although I felt proud of it at the time I did it.”

With this he threw his leg over the pommel of his saddle, produced a well-worn brier-root from his pocket, and proceeded to fill up for a smoke. When he had got his pipe fairly lighted he went on with his story something in this way :

It all happened a few years ago, when Carl was, as he considered himself, a little boy. He was the only scout at the fort, and it became necessary to send some dispatches to Fort Belknap. The fort was just on the outskirts of the Comanche country, and they were pretty hostile, and felt exceedingly vindictive toward anybody with white blood in their veins. Carl did not know much about the country, having never been down there but once, but he knew how to trail Indians. In fact, he could not remember the time when he couldn't do it. On the way he fell in with a troop of soldiers who were out punishing the savages for some outrage they had com-

mitted on the settlers, and as they were journeying toward the fort he kept company with them, and he never regretted it but once in his life. The company were all green ; not even the officers had ever been out after Indians before, and Carl did not know why it was that the Indians did not make an assault upon them. The Indians were all around them ; they could not help but see them, for they were on the summit of high swells looking at the troops, and at night they took extra pains to make a camp where they thought no Indians could surprise them.

Carl interrupted himself right here to say that if there was anybody on earth who could beat a Comanche in stealing horses, he had yet to hear of him. He would go inside a camp that was double guarded, get away with the best horse that could be found, and nobody would be the wiser for it until morning, by which time the Comanche would be so far away, and cover up his trail so nicely, that pursuit was impossible. When the time came for the soldiers to go to bed, he brought his horse in from the stable-lines and made his

lariat fast to his wrist. Then he would go to sleep, knowing that if any Indians came about, his horse would be certain to awaken him. They always had extra sentries out, and Carl felt perfectly safe.

One night, after the guide had been with the soldiers about three or four days, he was awakened about twelve o'clock by a terrible hubbub in camp. He started up and grabbed his lariat, and found that his horse was safe; but that was more than a dozen men could tell, all owning the best stock, too. A good many men had followed his example and tied their horses fast to them, but every one of them found his lariat cut and his horse gone. Of course those Comanches must be overtaken and punished for stealing their horses, but it seemed that Carl was the only one in camp who knew how to follow the trail. The commanding officer did not know it until he told him. When daylight came half the soldiers were out examining the trails, and they all led away in different directions.

"It is of no use, men," said the captain. "The trails branch out every which way, and

those of us who have lost our horses will have to go to the fort on foot."

That was the time for Carl to make known one of his accomplishments.

"Captain," said he, "I can lead the men in three days to the place where these trails will all come together again."

The captain looked at him in surprise, and during that time he surveyed him from head to foot. No doubt he thought that, for one of his years, he was talking a little too big; but after thinking a moment he ordered breakfast got ready and told the guide to go ahead.

"You say you have lived on the plains all your life," said he. "Then you must have seen Indian trails before. Be sure you don't disappoint me now."

Breakfast over, the cavalcade started, and for the first fifty miles Carl never followed a single trail. He kept right ahead toward a prominent butte that could be seen in the distance, and the captain, although he did not put much faith in him, allowed him to do as he pleased. The soldiers camped that night—and a sorry camp it was, too; they had no

fire to cook their grub by, and, worse than all, the boys had to do without a smoke—and about nine o'clock the next morning the guide found first one trail and then another, until he counted the tracks of a dozen shod horses. Carl looked at the captain, who reached over and shook hands with him.

"You see he was green," said Carl in an attempt to shield the captain. "He learned something during the time he was out with me, and when I came to go with him a second time he did not ask any help. He could follow the trail himself."

"In two days from now, if nothing happens to prevent, you will have the satisfaction of shooting at the Indians who stole your horses," said the guide.

A little before dark, while they were riding swiftly along a rocky trail that here ran through a gorge, Carl looked down and happened to see something that brought him to a standstill. He dismounted, and found that the dirt had been thrown up and stones placed upon it to hide it from curious eyes. He threw aside the stones and began investi-

gating with his sheath knife, the soldiers all standing around and wondering what he was looking for. A few prods with the knife, and Carl unearthed the horseshoes which had been removed by the Indians so that they could not be followed so easily.

"This beats me," said the captain. "How did you know that the shoes were there?"

"I just saw it," answered the guide. "When one is following a trail he must keep his eyes about him. I don't suppose you know that there is an Indian watching us over the summit of that swell, do you?"

The captain was profoundly amazed. He looked in every direction except the right one, but could see nothing.

CHAPTER III.

THE GHOST DANCE.

WHILE the guide was engaged in tossing out the shoes so that the soldiers could examine them he kept his eyes busy, and finally discovered something that fastened his gaze. It looked like a tuft of grass on the top of a swell, but as Carl looked at it he saw it move just a trifle. He was as certain as he wanted to be that there was an Indian behind that grass. He was watching the soldiers, and he had pulled up that grass to conceal the movements of his head.

“You are joking, ain’t you?” said the captain.

“I don’t joke in a case like this,” said the guide. “There is an Indian up there, and he wants to see what we are going to do.”

Carl pointed out the object that drew his attention, and the captain brought his binoculars to bear upon it. After gazing at it for a long time he said :

"I see some grass up there."

"That's grass, but there is a Comanche not far off. My advice would be to turn around and ride the other way as though we had missed the trail, and hide behind some of these swells until that tuft of grass goes away. That will give them confidence in themselves, and as soon as it comes dark we'll take the trail again."

"You don't suppose you can follow this trail in the night-time, do you?"

"I can try," said the guide, modestly.

Very reluctantly the captain gave the order to turn about, and in the course of an hour they got behind one of the swells, out of sight. Then the guide told the captain that if he would go back with him he would show him something. The officer left the command behind the swells, and after a long and toilsome creep up the hill they took off their hats and Carl made a hole in the grass for him to see through.

"I see that tuft of grass yet," said the captain, looking through his binoculars.

"So do I; but if you watch it for a few minutes you will see it go away."

They watched that swell for more than half an hour, and then the tuft of grass was laid aside, and the Indian showed his head and breast above the hill. He held that position for five or ten minutes, and then jumped to his feet and ran out of sight. The captain was much amazed to learn how easily Carl had picked out some grass that sheltered an Indian, and declared that if the guide had not been with him he never would have seen those Comanches again. They made their camp there behind the swell, eating hardtack and raw pork for want of a fire to cook by, and shortly after dark started on the trail again. At midnight the men stopped to rest, and Carl set out with a single soldier to hunt up the Indians' camp. Of course it was miserable going, with rocks and trees to impede their progress, but finally they came to the end of the gorge, and there Carl smelled smoke. The Indian camp was around there somewhere, so the guide left the soldier and went on ahead.

"I tell you there is no fun in creeping up on an Indian camp in the dead of night when

you don't know how many savages there are watching you," said Carl, once more interrupting himself in his story. "I made out that there were just three Indians in the lot _____"

"How did you make that out?" said Lieutenant Parker.

"They had to dismount when they went into camp, didn't they?" asked Carl. "That was the time I counted them. I found three moccasin tracks of different sizes, and that's the way I found out how many of them there were."

"Three Indians go into a camp of—how many men did you say you had?"

"About sixty, I reckon."

"The idea of three Indians going into a camp of sixty soldiers and stealing a dozen horses!" said Parker, in surprise. "They must have been horse-thieves indeed."

"Oh, I can tell you worse things than that," said Carl. "Yes; the three savages went into that camp and stole a dozen horses, and now we were close onto them. When I reached a point a little farther on I came to

an open space in the gully, and there I saw their camp fire. I took just one look at it, and then turned and went back. Of course the camp was alive after they found that I had located the Indians. Three or four men were left to care for the horses, and the rest of us crept forward to make the attack. The captain would not listen to my advice in regard to surrounding the camp, but when he arrived within sight of it he was going to make a rush, and kill or capture the Indians right there. That settled one thing in my mind. The captain may have been a brave man, but he was going to find an empty camp when they charged upon it; but I said nothing. If he had a mind to ride two hundred miles to turn the Indians loose, it was nothing to me."

Carl then proceeded with his story. In the course of time they arrived within sight of the fire, and then with a fierce yell the men bounded to their feet and rushed upon the camp. For himself, Carl did nothing. He just waited to find the Comanches, but he did not hear anybody shoot. After a time he walked up and found the soldiers rushing

frantically about looking for the redskins ; but the last one of them had skipped out.

“ Where have they gone ? ” asked the captain.

“ They ran when they heard you getting ready to charge,” said the guide. “ You did pretty well during the pursuit, but you are no man to fight Indians. You have got your horses, but you will have to look somewhere else to find the Comanches.”

The captain was astonished and mortified beyond measure, as Carl knew he would be if he attempted to capture the Indians in that way, but he had but little to say. He sent a couple of men down after the horses he had left in the ravine, and ordered the soldiers to go into camp. It was good to feel the fire once more, for the nights were getting cold, and to get some pork that they did not have to devour raw.

“ But how did you get the name of The Trailer ? ” asked Parker, when his companion knocked the ashes from his pipe.

“ Well, you see the soldiers belonging to that troop were mostly new to the business.

It was the first time they had ever been on a scout, and the way I followed the trail was something marvellous to them. Some of them had friends in Fort Scott, and when I went back I took a lot of mail for them. Of course they had something to say about their scout after the Comanches, and I came in for a share of the praise. Some one spoke of me as Carl, the Trailer, and I have been known by that name ever since."

"Now, if you have got all through with that story, I want to ask you about something else," said Lieutenant Parker. "Do you know anything about the Ghost Dance? Some people in the East think it is a myth, a new religion that has been taken up by a few fanatics, but which will fade away by the time the white folks quit noticing it."

"I know all about it," answered Carl, "fully as much as the Indians themselves know. If the people down East think it is a myth, they want to go among the Sioux at the present time. They will think there is a dread reality in it before they have been there very long."

"It was gotten up for the sake of going to war with the whites, I suppose?"

"No, it was not. It was gotten up by Wovoka, better known as the Cutter. He was a Piute Indian, and lived on the borders of the Mason Valley, which is a long way from here. The time he discovered the new religion was once when 'the sun died' and he was taken up into the other world."

"What in the name of sense is the meaning of that?" asked Parker.

"I will tell you how I account for it. About that time the Cutter, as I shall call him, was taken very ill with a fever, and some of the ranchmen attended him. You see he was very well known by the farmers, used to work for them, and so when he was sick they did all they could for him. While he was on what everybody supposed to be his deathbed the eclipse of the sun took place, and that is an event that is regarded with horror by all primitive people. The Indians hold that the sun is a living being, and that some monster is trying to devour it; and the noise and hubbub which they create to frighten this monster

away, such as firing off guns, blowing upon horns and yelling, is enough to drive one crazy. The excitement and alarm, acting upon a mind and body already enfeebled by disease, resulted in delirium, during which time he was taken up into the other world. Between 1884 and 1890 there was one eclipse which was total in Nevada; that was in 1889. Ever since that, the Cutter has been subject to cataleptic fits; and I suppose you know what they are."

Lieutenant Parker listened to Carl in silent admiration. Here was a boy who had never been to school a day in his life, and yet knew more about some things than he did. He began to look upon him with a great deal of respect.

"Yes, I know what catalepsis is," said Lieutenant Parker. "It is a sudden suspension of sensation and volition, the body and limbs preserving whatever position may be given them. For example, you put the hand up, and it stays there till you put it down; or you put the foot up, and it remains there."

It was now Carl's turn to look in surprise

toward the lieutenant. There was something in West Point after all, if it taught their young officers such things.

"And when he came to himself I suppose he was all ready for war," continued Parker.

"No, he wasn't. The Cutter is a peaceful man; he has never been seen on the war-path; when he came back to this earth he was more for peace than he ever was. He told his people that they must send their children to school and cultivate the ways of the white man as nearly as they could. They must all love one another and stop fighting."

"The Sioux don't take it that way," said Parker.

"I will come to the Sioux after awhile," said Carl. "Of course such a tale as that speedily spread to all the tribes round about. The Piutes gave it to the ones nearest them, and in less than a year it was spread all over the plains. It even got to Washington, and the Department sent out a man to inquire into it. I might have gone with that man as well as not, but I was like the majority of our people out here. We heard of the new religion

and laughed at it; but it seems that there was something in it. Wovoka did not claim to be the Messiah, but he did claim to be a dreamer. But an Indian never does anything without a dance, and he taught them this thing which has since developed into the Ghost Dance. To render his visit more binding he gave the Washington man a cloak of rabbit skins, some piñon nuts, some tail feathers of the magpie, and a quantity of red paint, which they were to mix with red paint of their own and put on whenever they engaged in the Ghost Dance."

"Well, what is the doctrine of the Ghost Dance, anyway?" asked Lieutenant Parker.

"The doctrine is that the time will come when the whole Indian race, living and dead, will reunite upon the earth and live a life of happiness, free from death, disease and misery."

"But their game is all gone," said Parker. "They can't live the same as they did before."

"Their game is going to come back. During one of his fits the Cutter caught a glimpse of an immense crowd of warriors coming toward the earth driving before them a lot of animals

—buffalo, deer, elk and ponies. But the Great Spirit—that is the Messiah—turned them back, for he said the proper time had not yet come.”

“And the Sioux think this can only come by extinction of the whites?” inquired Parker.

“The whites must be rooted out before the time arrives. They are going to keep up this Ghost Dance to help the matter along. I am almost to the Sioux now.”

“I beg your pardon,” said Lieutenant Parker. “I will not interrupt you again, but I want to get at the truth of the matter.”

“This is just what I want you to do. I want you to see that, while this new religion came upon the earth as a gospel of peace, it has taken such a hold of the Sioux that it means war. Whether or not the men they sent out to investigate the matter lied to them I don’t know; but if this thing is not put a stop to right away, we are going to have an outbreak as sure as you are born. If all the Sioux look upon it as do those six hundred men that go with Sitting Bull and Red Cloud, we shall have a war here that will do your heart good.”

“How many men can the Sioux raise if they all go to war at once?” inquired Parker.

“Probably five thousand men; and we can bring about three thousand to oppose them.”

“How many people does the Sioux nation number altogether?”

“About twenty thousand.”

As Carl said this he brought out his tobacco-bag and filled up for another smoke.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SOLITARY HORSEMAN.

“THIS man, although he was an officer sent out from Washington to look into the matter, did many things to help this trouble along, but he did not know it at the time,” continued Carl, after drawing a few vigorous pulls at his pipe to make sure that the tobacco was well started. “When he came back he went among the Arapahoes and Cheyennes, because he had some friends among them, and he wanted to set their minds at rest. He told them what Wovoka, the Cutter, had said to him, claiming that he was not the Messiah but one who had seen him, and gave them some of the piñon nuts to eat. You haven’t seen any of those piñon nuts around here, have you?”

“No, I haven’t,” said Parker.

“Well, out in the country where the Piute Indians live they are used every day for food;

and yet those Arapahoes and Cheyennes received them as if they came from the hands of the Messiah himself. Those Indians were anxious to touch this man by the hand and lay hold of his clothes, believing that if they but touched the Cutter some good would come to them. When the man went East to make his report to Washington, the Arapahoes and Cheyennes sent some prominent men to investigate for themselves. They were gone all winter, and brought back some queer stories that this man had not told them, because he did not know anything about them. Finally the Sioux got hold of it, and became excited at once. They seemed to think it was what they had so long been waiting for—a summons to go to war and wipe the whites off the face of the earth. They, too, sent out some men, and they brought back some other strange stories. One thing the Cutter told them was, that if they got weary with their journey—Wovoka lives all of a thousand miles from here—they had but to call upon the Great Spirit, and he would set them miles ahead on their route. Another thing was, that if they killed a buffalo

on their journey they were to take everything except the tail and hoofs, and that after they got out of sight the buffalo would come to life again."

Lieutenant Parker laughed loudly when he heard it.

"The idea," he exclaimed. "To think that twenty thousand people could be fooled in that way! After a buffalo is dead he is *dead*, and nothing can bring him to life again."

"Well, I don't know that the Indian is so much to blame for that," said Carl, looking down at the horn of his saddle. "You know how susceptible the savage is to superstition. All his life he has been planning and thinking about getting rid of the whites. We are his evil genius; and if we could be driven out of the country everything would go along as smoothly as it did before. One of their agents, in making out his report to Washington, has twelve different counts against our people."

"What have we done to the Sioux?" demanded Parker, opening his eyes in surprise.

"Take, for instance, a supply of goods which ought to have been here by August but

did not get here until midwinter," said Carl in reply. "I guess that was enough to set a more patient people than the Sioux on the warpath. A good many of them starved to death in spite of all the army could do to prevent it. I tell you, you would find it mighty hard to be loyal to a Government that could deliberately go back on you in that way."

"Why, Carl, I did not know you were such an Indian lover," said Lieutenant Parker.

"I am an Indian lover in this way: I say they have been abused, and shamefully, too. When the Black Hills were given up to them, they were assured that they should belong to them and their heirs forever. Everything went on smoothly until gold was discovered there, and from that time the trouble began. Custer was sent through that country, not with any instructions to turn the settlers out, but just to examine the spot; and the consequence was that in less than a year the Black Hills were overrun with prospectors."

"Well, the Indians were in our way," said Lieutenant Parker. "If they had behaved themselves——"

“Yes, and seen their buffaloes all killed before their eyes. I tell you, lieutenant, you don’t know what a buffalo is to an Indian. It furnishes him with everything he needs, including skins for his tepee, robes to keep him warm in midwinter and sinews for sewing his clothes together. A white man kills them just to make a record. Sometimes he takes their tails home to hang up in his study and and sometimes he don’t. There are but few buffaloes left, and they are in Yellowstone Park. I hope the Government will take a hand in protecting them.”

Lieutenant Parker could not say a word against this, for he knew it was all true. He knew how he would feel if some people stronger than his own should follow him year after year, take his land away from him, and destroy the only means he had of making a living. He had never looked at it in this way before. He supposed that the redskins were born with a natural enmity against the whites, and that nothing could turn them from a desire to take vengeance on them. He did not know that he blamed the Indian so much, after all.

“When the Sioux Indians who had been sent away to inquire into the matter came back,” continued Carl, “they brought with them the news that they had seen the Messiah himself, that they had talked with him, and that when the proper time came he was going to help the Indians, and not the whites.”

“That shows that they meant to get up a war,” said Parker, forgetting, so deeply was he interested in the story, that he had promised not to interrupt any more.

“It certainly looks that way. The Sioux said he would be here by the time the grass was green in the spring; but, in order to speed his coming, they must engage in a dance which was to last five days.”

“That accounts for the exhaustion that some of the dancers experience. They go on until they are completely played out and then swoon from the effects of it.”

“That is my idea exactly,” said the guide. “A great many people who have witnessed the dance lay it to hypnotism. Now, what does that mean?”

"I don't know that I can tell you," said Parker, after thinking a moment. "It is a certain form of sleep, brought on by artificial means, in which there is a suspension of certain bodily powers and unusual activity of others. That is as near as I can get at it. And when they come back to earth again—I don't know whether they lie or not—they tell big stories of what they have seen in the spirit land."

"And they are going to keep it up until we go to war with them," said Carl earnestly. "You see they have got their homes to fight for, and when the time comes for the Indians to take possession of this country, all the whites and tribes who do not believe as they do will be overwhelmed by a flood; but the believers, those who did the dancing, will escape by fleeing to the tops of the mountains."

"And Sitting Bull is to blame for that?"

"Yes—and Red Cloud. They are as strongly in favor of the dance as anyone they have got under them, and they are keeping it up in defiance of all the army officers can say and do against it. They are very sly; they talk only in their own language, although

some say that Sitting Bull can sign his name in English; but I don't believe it. Nobody can get at anything an Indian does, and when this outbreak comes, it will come like an avalanche."

"All you have said is news to me," said Lieutenant Parker thoughtfully. "I believe that the Ghost Dance is not a myth; but, as you say, it will lead to something else."

The lieutenant grew uneasy after that, and wished his companion would offer some advice about watching over the men in his little train; but he did not act as if there was an Indian within a thousand miles of him. Carl knew all about the plains and those who inhabited them, and when he began to be uneasy it would be time enough for him to do something; but he thought it would be worth while to ask some counsel on the subject.

"You said that this outbreak would come before we are aware of it," said he. "How do you know that it will not come on us who are out hunting?"

"There is little danger of that, unless some Indian saw us when we left the fort or will

run against some of us while we are away from the camp. This country all belongs to them, and it would be right and proper that we should be wiped out."

Of course Lieutenant Parker did not feel any easier for asking his guide to express an opinion on the situation. He did not show it in his face, but he felt the cold chills run all over him.

"I don't know that he talked that way in order to frighten me," thought Parker, "but I hope that we shall not see any Indians while we are gone. I would not know how to act."

The hunters did not stop when they reached Lost River, but drove past a camp which those who had gone before them had made during their hunt in the foothills. The sergeant did not halt at that camp, for he wanted a "fresh spot" in which to pass the night. Half a mile farther on he found a place that suited him, and there he stopped his men and rode back to Lieutenant Parker, who had been riding behind the wagons all the way.

"Will this place suit you, sir?" said he, with his hand to his cap.

The lieutenant dismounted from his horse, ran his eye up and down the river, and said the place selected for the camp would answer the purpose. He directed the sergeant to detail some of the men to clear away the underbrush, the others to take care of the horses and pitch the tents, while he and Carl removed their saddles and seated themselves at the foot of the nearest tree to have their talk out. The tents were pitched, one for himself and Carl and the other for the men, and one of the soldiers proceeded to wash his hands and begin to get supper.

But we don't propose to spend much time with their supper or with the hunts that came off during the week following. We have set out to write about the Ghost Dance and the various incidents connected with it, and so the hunting will have to do for another story. It will be enough to say that the party was successful beyond its hopes; that one wagon was loaded in two days and sent to the fort under the command of a corporal, that they killed more than one bear, and that the lieutenant fairly shot himself into the good graces

of Carl, the Trailer. In fact his marksmanship rather surprised himself, he had been so long out of practice. He either shot his game dead, or it did not run over fifty yards before it was found. Carl began to treat the lieutenant with more courtesy than he had previously shown him.

But at length the week for which they had come out drew to a close, and they began making preparations to return to the fort. When they were ready to start, Carl, who had been behaving rather strangely of late, keeping his Winchester with him all the while and walking around the camp when he supposed everyone else was asleep, drew up beside Parker, who was riding in his usual place behind the wagon.

"Have you seen any signs of Indians lately?" he asked.

"Nary sign," replied Parker, "and I looked closely, too."

"Well, I saw some," replied the guide in a quiet way which made the lieutenant open his eyes. "I saw the print of an Indian's foot by the side of that stream that we were hunting

upon a few days ago, and I know that they have been loafing around our camp ever since."

"Why did you not tell me of it?" asked Parker with some heat.

"What good would it have done? You were having a good time during our hunt, and I did not want to say anything to take away your pleasure. Besides, they were too small a party to attack us, if they had any such thought in mind, and were only watching us to see where we went. It is my belief that we shall see some more of them before we reach the fort."

Lieutenant Parker was profoundly astonished. The idea that his guide should see Indian signs and say nothing to him about it was something he had never dreamed of. It was not treating him right as commander of the expedition. He did not want to say anything more to him, and Carl, as if guessing the way his thoughts ran, relapsed into silence and rode on without saying a word; but he kept his eyes open, and carefully scanned the top of every swell they passed. Lieutenant

Parker did likewise, for somehow he could not get over the thought that was uppermost in the mind of the guide "that they would be sure to see more of the Indians before they reached the fort." Sergeant Leeds was an old soldier, and was constantly on the lookout for suspicious signs; consequently he was not at all alarmed when he discovered a solitary savage, on the top of a neighboring hill, closely watching all their movements. He took one look at him, and then reined in his horse to wait until his superior came up.


"There's a Sioux up there, sir," said he, "and he seems to be more interested in our movements than we are ourselves."

Lieutenant Parker had thus far ridden with his hands in his pockets, but when he pulled them out to take up the reins he found that they trembled in spite of himself.

CHAPTER V.

REINFORCEMENTS.

LIEUTENANT PARKER, accompanied by his guide, rode up to the head of the line, where he could get a good view of the Indian. His face was very pale—he knew it as well as if he had glanced into a mirror to see it—and he looked at the savage through his binoculars. He thought of Lieutenant Kidder, who, with the thirteen men composing his expedition, had been completely annihilated by these same Indians, and wondered if destiny had the same fate in store for himself. The Indian was alone, but that was no proof that his band might not be on the opposite side of the swell, waiting to see what the result of his investigation was going to be. He was dressed in war costume. On his head was a bonnet gaudily ornamented with feathers which trailed and fluttered behind him, and he held a gun of some description in his hands.



As Parker looked at him he dismounted from his horse, held his gun up so that the hunters could see it, and laid it upon the ground.

"He is disarming himself," said the lieutenant.

"That is a sign that he wants to speak to you," said Carl.

"Well, I don't want to speak to him. If he comes any nearer to us I shall send him back."

The expedition had not halted at all during this time, but kept straight ahead, as though the way was perfectly clear. Having disarmed himself, the Indian mounted his horse and rode down the hill to meet the hunters.

"There are Sioux on both our flanks," said the guide after a little pause.

"So there are," said Lieutenant Parker, casting a hasty glance on both sides of him. "Keep your eyes open, Carl, and the first move they make let me know it. That Indian has come close enough."

The lieutenant raised his hand and made a signal to halt and go back, just as a boy who is playing "I spy" does to a comrade whose

interest it is to keep out of sight. The Indian stopped and made other signs which Parker did not understand; but the Indian understood the signal to halt, however, and when it was repeated with more energy than usual, he turned his horse and rode back to the top of the swell. Parker glanced at his men, and was gratified to see that every one had put away his pipe and held his carbine in readiness for use. It certainly looked as though there was going to be a fight. He thought of all the instructions the colonel had given him, and was ready to carry them out. His voice was as steady as usual when he inquired of his guide:

“What did that Indian mean when he made those other signals?”

“He simply wanted to communicate—that was all,” replied Carl.

“And what do you suppose would have been the result if I had spoken to him?” continued Parker.

“He would have come up and held some conversation with you through an interpreter, and in the meantime his band would have

slipped over and been all ready to carry out his programme, whatever it is."

"Then you really think he has got some other Indians waiting for him on the other side of the hill?" said Parker.

"Certainly I do. They would have come over here one by one, so as not to arouse your suspicions, and when there were enough of them here to overpower us the chief would have given his war-whoop, and in less than two minutes we would all have been dead men."

"But some of them would have done their last shooting," said Parker, his eyes flashing while he gripped his Winchester with a firmer hold. "My soldiers were all ready."

"Of course; that was to be expected. But you don't suppose that the loss of a few warriors would whip his whole band?"

"Well, I did perfectly right in telling that chief that I did not want to speak to him," said Parker, drawing a long breath of relief. "Do you think he will pitch into us when we get to the top of the hill?"

"No, for he could not choose a worse battle-

ground. He will probably follow along behind us for a few miles and then give it up."

Lieutenant Parker afterward said that he never in his life felt such a tremor of fear as he did when he mounted the swell on which the Indian had stood half an hour before. He expected that the appearance of his cap above the hill would be the signal for a volley of rifle-balls. His guide rode beside him all the way, and as Parker looked at him he wished he had some of that boy's fearlessness. He did not seem to care for the Indians at all, and neither did his face change color. He took off his sombrero, smoothed his long hair down across his shoulders and out of range of his eyes, all the while keeping his gaze directed toward the hills on each flank, to see that the savages did not make a rush upon them. When they mounted to the top of the swell not an Indian was to be seen, either in front or on the flanks. They had disappeared completely.

"Well, that squad of Sioux was easily whipped," said Parker; and only those who have been in similar situations can realize

how great was his satisfaction. "I looked for us to be laid out the minute we came in sight."

"There isn't a gully within half a mile of here," said Carl, "and this proves to be the sort of fighting-ground that they don't want. They would surround us with a horde of shrieking savages, all going at the top of their speed, so that we would find it difficult to hit one of them, and when they tired their horses they would go into that gully and rest and make up some other scheme for getting the advantage of us. Then they would come out and go at it again."

"I declare there is some more of them over there," said Parker, whose eyes had been constantly sweeping the horizon.

"Yes, and I am glad to see them."

"Are they soldiers?" exclaimed Parker.

"They are, and the Indians caught sight of them before we did. That is what drove them away."

Lieutenant Parker breathed easy after that. With his glass he could not make out the blue uniforms because they were so far away, but

he had faith in his guide's word; and just then Sergeant Leeds came up and saluted.

"The colonel was getting skeary on account of us, sir," said he, with a wink of his eye that spoke volumes. "Them are soldiers who are coming out to see what has become of us."

At the end of an hour the approaching cavalcade was near enough for the hunters to see their uniforms, and Parker and his guide galloped out to meet them. There were two troops of them, and this proved that the colonel knew something of the strength of the band which he was afraid would meet them on the way.

"Well, old boy, I am glad to see that you got back safe," said the captain in command, as he leaned forward and extended his hand to Lieutenant Parker. "Did you see any of them?"

"Yes, sir. We saw one standing on the top of that swell back there, and he made signs that he wanted to speak to us; but I replied that I did not want to speak to him, and at the same time my guide discovered some other Indians looking at us over the swells on our flanks."

“You did well, sir; you did well. You will make an Indian fighter one of these days. Now let us see how much game you have.”

“Did that other expedition get through all right, sir?” asked Parker.

“Oh, yes. They did not see any Sioux on the way to bother them at all. You see, the way we found out that they have an inclination to go on the warpath at all was this: Agent Galbraith sent a couple of men—— Well, I will give it up. They got more game than we did, sergeant.”

While the captain was speaking he rode around to the rear of the wagon, lifted the canvas and looked under it. It was literally filled with the animals that had fallen to the hunters' rifles; and when the officer reached in and felt the plump quarters of an elk his mouth watered.

“I must have a piece of that elk for my supper,” said he.

“How about the Sioux getting on the warpath, sir?” said Lieutenant Parker. He was anxious to hear about that.

“Oh, yes. Lieutenant Hawkins, you take

command of the column and march them back to the fort. I will ride behind with the boys. You see, Agent Galbraith sent up a couple of men to order the Sioux to stop their Ghost Dance, and when the Sioux found that they were coming they pointed their guns at them and warned them to go back. That was all the news we wanted. The next day they sent a band of warriors to loaf about the fort, and that is what scared the colonel. He was sure they would find you out here and he sent me to look you up."

"I am sure it was very kind of him," said Parker. "Are all the Sioux engaged in this Ghost Dance, sir?"

"No, there are probably twenty thousand of them in all, and more than half of them don't take any stock in the Ghost Dance. They can no doubt raise six hundred or a thousand men, and we have three thousand to oppose them. We are all around them, too. I wish that old Sitting Bull was captured."

During the ride to Fort Scott the captain, who talked plainly and explained many things about the Ghost Dance which the young offi-

cer had failed to understand, finally convinced him that his guide had told him nothing but the truth. As American Horse, a brave chieftain of the Sioux, once said while making a speech before the Peace Commissioners: "We were made many promises, but have never heard from them since." Take, for instance, the issue of beef which was made at the Standing Rock Agency. In one year it amounted to eight million pounds; and in three years more, after the whites had got all the land the Indians wanted to sell, it was reduced to four million pounds, or just half of what they wanted. It was no wonder that the Indians complained of starvation; and when they asked permission to go off their reservation to hunt for the food that was to keep their families from giving way to the appeals of hunger, they were refused.

"I don't blame the Indians so much, after all," said Parker.

"And if you come right down to that, neither do I," whispered the captain. "The Government will not give the Indians over to the War Department, as many thinking men

advise them to do, and we have got to stand by and see them suffer. And another thing: you don't know how those Indians behave themselves when they take the bit in their teeth and go off their reservation. I tell you, you would remember all the broken promises the whites have made you and go in strong for revenge. Of course we soldiers can't stand by, with our hands in our pockets, and let innocent people suffer because of what the Department at Washington has done to them, and we have to stand between the settlers and Indian barbarities."

"And the Sioux don't think much of us any way, do they, sir?"

"Not now they don't, for they are as well armed as we are. In olden times, when the trappers roamed through this country, the Indians were all armed with bows and arrows, and it was very seldom you heard of a company of men being annihilated. The trappers had so little to steal that the Sioux did not think it worth while to lose the lives of three or four men in the effort to get it. The trappers were dead shots, and they brought an

Indian every time they pulled on him. The Indians would keep an eye on the trappers' camps, and when there was no one there to protect them they would sneak up and steal everything they could lay their hands on. But now the case is different. The savages are armed with rifles and revolvers, and it has to be a pretty strong force that can march through their country."

"You really think there is going to be a war, do you, sir?"

"I do, unless we can go to work and arrest that Sitting Bull, and that will take our whole force. Those Sioux are not going to stand by and see us capture their biggest medicine man without some resistance."

Lieutenant Parker drew a long breath and told himself that his prospects of seeing an Indian fight were very good indeed.

CHAPTER VI.

DISPATCHES.

“BY the way, Parker, I think the colonel has some other business for you to transact when you get back to the fort,” said the captain, when they had ridden a little while in silence. “Of course the colonel has not said so, but I rather gained the idea from something I heard the adjutant say to him.”

“I am ready to assume anything he thinks I can do, sir,” said the lieutenant, who wondered what this new business was going to be. “I will even go to Standing Rock Agency.”

“And I suppose that is right where he wants to send you with dispatches for General Miles,” said the captain. “You will have one guide with you, and as large an escort as the colonel may think you need.”

“I am ready to undertake it,” said Parker, “but I don’t intend to be captured.”

“That’s the way to talk,” said the captain.

"But the colonel does not expect that the Sioux will attempt to capture you and hold you as a prisoner. You will have to go right by the place where they are holding their Ghost Dance, and if the Indians discover you, they will lose no time in keeping you until their dance is over."

"I don't see what good that will do, sir. Don't they want us to know anything about it?"

"Well, I guess they don't. The Sioux have a theory that if anyone outside their tribe witnesses the ceremony, that will make the dance of no account, and it will all have to be done over again."

Lieutenant Parker seemed to have grown two inches when he heard this. He was going to get a chance to make a hero of himself—that is, if the colonel thought fit to send him with the dispatches. He thought of what old California Joe would have done in a case like this. After Custer's fight with Black Kettle, in which a great victory was gained and the power of the Cheyennes completely broken, Joe was selected as a courier to carry the re-

port to General Sheridan, whose headquarters were at Camp Supply. The journey was only about a hundred miles long, but it was through a country that was thickly covered with hostile Indians. General Custer offered him an escort of fifty men, but to his surprise Joe said he did not want anybody except Jack Corbin, his partner. Custer told him to go ahead, and these two men made the journey—two hundred miles—in just forty-eight hours, although they had several wide detours to make in order to keep clear of the savages. Lieutenant Parker did not know whether or not he was experienced enough to try such a plan as that, but he determined that he would attempt it. Everything depended on getting by the Sioux without being seen. If the Indians discovered him he would certainly be captured, and what would be done with him after that he did not know. He would not say anything to the captain about it, but if the colonel asked him how large an escort he wanted, he would take Carl, the Trailer, and set off.

The captain was a talkative fellow, and

during the twenty years of his life that he had passed on the plains and among the wild Indians he had gained a world of information, and accumulated an almost inexhaustible fund of stories which he was ready to tell for the benefit of younger officers. He related one after another of his anecdotes during the march to the fort; and when at last the white-washed stockade came into full view and Lieutenant Parker rode through the wide gate, he saw that the teamsters and soldiers stopped and raised their hats to him, a thing they had never done before. Parker was popular among the soldiers; for, although he was very strict,—as much so as the colonel himself,—and tried as hard to make his men “toe the mark,” when off duty he was “hail-fellow well met” with everybody. The captain and Parker came out from behind the wagon to see their men come into line in front of the colonel’s headquarters, and then dismounted and went in to report.

“I have returned, sir,” said the captain. “I found the lieutenant coming along the prairie all right. He had some experience

with the Sioux, but he came on ahead as though there was nothing there."

"Very good, sir," said the colonel. "You may dismiss your men." Then, unbending a little from his official dignity, he held out his hand to Parker and smiled upon him over his gold spectacles. "Well, my boy, I am glad to see that you have returned all right."

"I have returned, sir," said Parker, not forgetting that part of his duty, "and I have a wagonful of game."

"Well, now, go on and tell me something about those Sioux you met. Were they a large party?"

"I did not see all of them, sir; not more than a dozen. The chief made signs that he wanted to talk to me, but I sent him back. I thought if he wanted to talk to anybody he could come down here and talk to you. He knew where your headquarters were as well as I did."

"There were a good many more than a dozen men in that party," said the colonel. "That was the reason I sent the captain out after you. Have you had sleep enough?"

"Yes, sir, all I want," said Parker, who now thought he was about to hear of the additional business the colonel had for him to do.

"Can you go without sleep to-night?"

"Yes, sir, and for forty-eight hours longer."

"I guess somebody has been saying a little to you about what I have on hand," said the colonel with a smile. "Well, I don't know as I blame the captain for that. How large an escort of soldiers do you think you will want to go with you to Standing Rock Agency?"

"I want just one, sir."

"One!" exclaimed the colonel, opening his eyes. "Remember that you will have to cross their lines somewhere."

"I know it, sir; but it will be easier for two men to hide than it will for a larger number. If I were going to ask for a larger squad than I have named, I should ask for your whole force."

The commanding officer settled back in his chair and stared at the lieutenant without speaking.

"I would like to have one man go with me, sir, if I might be allowed a choice," said the lieutenant.

"Who is it?"

"Carl, the Trailer."

"You seem to have got on pretty good terms with him during the last week," said the colonel, straightening up again. "Well, come around in about half an hour and I will talk to you. I want to add something to these dispatches about the war-party of Sioux you met while coming home. Bring Preston with you. You may dismiss your men, and detail two of them to cut up game enough for supper. Perhaps you had better get something to eat before you go."

Lieutenant Parker arose to his feet, made his best salute, and went out. He seemed to be treading on air. The colonel thought enough of him to send him where he had always sent a brave and experienced man, and here he was scarcely six months out of West Point. The captain was standing just outside the door, with his hands on his hips, watching his men, who were going toward the stables,

and hearing the lieutenant's footsteps behind him turned and looked over his shoulder.

"I tell you it pays to keep your weather-eye open, sir," said Parker, as he came up and saluted.

"Have you got it?" demanded the captain, who seemed as delighted as the lieutenant himself.

"I don't know, sir, but I have orders to come around in half an hour and bring Carl, the Trailer, with me."

"Then you are going—you can bet on that. Did you hear who else he is going to send with you? I wonder if he will select me?"

"That is all I want, sir."

"All! Carl, the Trailer!"

"Yes, sir."

"Good heavens, young man, you're crazy! You will never get through their lines in the world."

"Don't you think it would be easier for two men to hide than it would be for fifty, sir?"

"Are you going to hide from them? Did you tell that to the colonel?"

"I did, sir."

"Then you won't go; you can bet your bottom dollar on that. You don't want to hide from them," continued the captain, seeing that the lieutenant looked disappointed over what had been said. "You want to go by them openly and above-board, so as to let them know that we are not afraid of them. If they see that we know they are going on with the dance, I think they will stop it. Be careful in the future, when the colonel is talking of sending you on an expedition, that you don't say anything about *hiding*. That's a word that won't go down."

"But look here, captain," said Parker, a bright idea striking him, "the colonel suggested that I get something to eat before I go."

"W-h-e-w!" whistled the captain. "This beats me. Here you are ordered to take dispatches through a band of savages who have never yet done the first thing to indicate that they were on the warpath excepting to point their guns at those two men that Galbraith sent out to stop them in their Ghost Dance,

and the colonel does not object to your hiding from them ! I can't understand it."

"Perhaps he does not want it to get out among them that he has been sending dispatches to General Miles," suggested Parker.

"Oh, he needn't think to stop it that way. Mark my words," said the captain, approaching close to Parker and laying his forefinger upon his shoulder, "the Sioux will know of that dispatch as soon as Miles will. You needn't think to keep it from them."

So saying the captain walked away, leaving Parker lost in wonder. He glanced about the parade ground, but he couldn't see anything of a Sioux brave there ; and then, seeing his men drawn up in line and waiting for him to dismiss them, he beckoned Leeds to approach him.

"Break ranks," said he, "and set two of the men at work cutting up some of that game for supper. Remember that the captain wants some of that elk."

Having thus disposed of his men, Lieutenant Parker walked slowly toward the place where Carl, the Trailer, was standing, waiting to see what was going to happen.

"Say, Carl," he said, sinking his voice almost to a whisper, "do you see any Sioux Indians around here?"

"Nary one," said the guide.

"I have been ordered to take some dispatches to General Miles, and you are to go with me to show me the way. You and I are to go alone."

"I am ready," said Carl.

"I have been talking with the captain about it, and he says that the Sioux will know of that dispatch as soon as Miles will. Now, it strikes me that there must be somebody here to carry the news."

"I don't know whether he meant that or not—I can't say; but I have no fear of not getting into the fort with dispatches. When we come out and try to get home is where they are going to catch us."

"Do you think that is the place they will watch for us?"

"It is always the place where I begin to use caution," said the guide.

"You are not afraid to attempt it?"

Carl, the Trailer, raised himself up to his

full height and looked at the lieutenant. He did not speak, and Parker did not press him for an answer.

"I don't know but I should be afraid if I were in your place," continued the lieutenant. "There are some people here who would not be anyways sorry to hear of your death."

"Let them come," said Carl; and Parker had never seen such an expression of rage and contempt as overspread his features. "I am ready for them."

"Do you know who they are?"

"Of course I do."

Lieutenant Parker waited to hear more. He wanted to find out whether or not those people who would in any way profit by the death of the guide were relatives; but Carl had no more to say. He stood with one arm thrown over his saddle, and waited for Parker to send him away about his business.

"Well, then, I suppose you are all right," said the lieutenant. "Go and get something to eat, and be on hand in half an hour. It is now four o'clock," he added, glancing at his watch. "We must see General Miles, get

his return dispatch, and be back here in forty-eight hours. Do you suppose we can do it?"

"If you can keep up I'll be on time," said the guide, leading his horse toward the gate.

"I really wish I had not said anything about that," said Parker, as he led his own horse away toward the stables. "I've got him down on me, and that is one thing I don't like."

CHAPTER VII.

GOING IN.

LIEUTENANT PARKER had not much time to waste if he expected to be before the commanding officer in half an hour, and he went about his work as if he was thoroughly in earnest. He placed his horse in one of the stalls, removed his saddle, gave him a good feed at the same time, in order to "brace him up" for his long journey, and then proceeded to rub him down. All the while he was thinking about his recent interview with Carl, the Trailer, and promised himself that he would steer clear of that subject in future.

"I'll do that for you, sir," said a voice near him.

Parker looked up, and saw Sergeant Leeds with his hand to his cap.

"I really wish you would," said he, putting the brush into the sergeant's willing hand. "I've got just half an hour to get my supper

and present myself before the colonel, and I want the horse to go away with me to-night."

"Very well, sir. The horse will be ready."

Parker hurried off, and in a few minutes was standing before the washbowl in his own quarters. He wished to get a little of the dust of travel off his hands and face, put on a clean shirt, and make himself appear as neat as an officer should who expected to have an interview with his general before he slept again. His room-mate had been on guard duty the night before and was now making up for his loss of sleep; but he heard Parker stepping about the room, and opened his eyes and stretched his arms.

"Well, old fellow, I am glad to see you back," said he. "Do you know I have been worrying about you ever since yesterday morning?"

"About that war-party?" said Parker.

"They are the very fellows. They did not come about the fort, but some of the scouts discovered them and reported to the colonel. That is what made him send the captain out after you."

"Well, I got away from them all right. I hope I shall be as lucky this time."

"This time!" repeated Randolph. "Why, where are you going?"

"I am going to Fort Yates."

Randolph was utterly amazed to hear this. He threw off the blanket and sat up on the bed.

"The colonel wants to send a report to General Miles, and is now adding a word about this war-party I met," continued Parker. "I've got to be with him in half an hour."

"You are going in command of a big escort, of course," said Randolph, angry at himself because he was so long neglected. "Perhaps I will get a chance to go with you."

"I don't think you will this time. I am only going to take Carl, the Trailer."

"And no more?" said Randolph, who grew more and more amazed.

"He is all I asked for, and I believe I am going to get him."

"Well, when you get ready to start come in and let me bid you good-by," said Lieutenant Randolph, again stretching himself on

the bed. "I will never see you dressing in this room again."

"Our biggest scouts take no more with them than that," said Parker. "They want somebody with them if they get into trouble, but they don't want a large party for fear that they cannot conceal themselves."

"Who is talking about concealing a party?" asked Randolph in disgust. "You had better not let the colonel know that."

"He knows it already."

"And did he agree to it?"

"He raised no objections to it, but told me to come back in half an hour. I tell you I had better go on, for twenty minutes of my time is gone already. Good-by, Rand. I hope I shall see you again within forty-eight hours."

This was too much for Randolph. He got upon his feet and shook his companion's hand as though he never expected to see him again. Then he opened his mouth as if he were about to say something, but no sound came forth. He turned and threw himself upon the bed again.

"I declare, I hope that everybody won't act that way," said Lieutenant Parker, as, with a face that had lost considerable of its confidence, he took rapid steps toward his mess-room. "The first thing I know I shall begin to behave that way myself."

When Parker entered the mess-room he summoned the cook, and found that all that was left for him was what remained of what the officers had had for dinner. "If Lieutenant Parker could only wait for a few minutes"—but Lieutenant Parker could not wait for even one minute. He had an order from the commanding officer which must be fulfilled to the letter; so the cook began to bestir himself, and in a short time a very good meal was placed before him. He ate with his watch open beside him, so that he could cast his eyes upon it with every mouthful he took, and at precisely the time agreed upon he jumped up and started for the door. As he stepped down off the threshold, the first one he saw was Carl, the Trailer. The savage scowl had left his face and he looked just as he did during their hunt.

“You are on hand, I see,” said Lieutenant Parker. “Come on; we have not a single instant to lose.”

The young officer took his way toward the colonel's headquarters, and found him in the act of sealing an envelope which he was going to send to General Miles. He simply nodded when the boys came in and then went on addressing it; and when he had got that done he settled back in his chair, struck a match to his pipe, which had gone out, and looked at them for several minutes without speaking. Finally he said:

“Preston, are you sure that you want to go to Fort Yates in company with Lieutenant Parker?”

“Why, colonel, I don't see anything wrong about him,” said the guide. “We will get the dispatches into the hands of the general in due time, but how soon you will get the letters he sends in return I don't know.”

“Ah! that's just what I am afraid of,” said the colonel uneasily. “You are afraid there will be somebody there to watch you when you come out.”

Carl, the Trailer, said that that was what he was afraid of.

“Well, I don’t know as it makes much difference to me what he sends in return,” said the colonel, after gazing abstractedly at his table for a few minutes. “He will have to send them down by his own scouts. If you can get into the fort, it is all I ask for. If you are all ready you can go. I shall expect you back here in three days.”

Lieutenant Parker wanted to tell his colonel that if he did not see them by that time day after to-morrow he would not see them at all, but he thought he would wait and let his actions speak for him. Parker took the papers which the colonel handed him and put them into the pocket of his coat, which he buttoned up; and after shaking him by the hand and listening to his words of encouragement and advice, the boys went out. There were many around the gate to see them off, for Lieutenant Parker had never gone on an errand like this before, and when the boys mounted their horses and rode out of the stables, caps were lifted all around them. Randolph was there,

for he could not stand idly by and let his companion go off on that dangerous mission without another word to him.

“Good-by, old fellow,” said he, pressing up close to Parker, so that he could take his hand. “Remember that I shall look for you by day after to-morrow.”

“I will be on hand,” exclaimed Parker, with a sweeping salute to all the rest of them who had gathered around. “If the horses hold out I shall certainly be here.”

“That fellow acted as though he was not going to see you any more,” said Carl, when they had left the fort behind them. “I don’t see the use of their making so much fuss over our going. I have been to Standing Rock Agency half a dozen times since this trouble began, and have always got back safe.”

“Well, it had no effect upon me except to make me all the more determined to come back,” said Parker. “The colonel said that if we could get into the fort it was all he asked for. Now, what does he mean by that?”

“It means that some things have happened

that are going to put us in more danger than we supposed," said Carl. "To my mind there is something up."

"You think the dance has got farther along than we know anything about?" said Parker.

"It must be that. The Sioux are determined that no one shall cross their reservation. But the first thing we have to do is to get those papers you have in your pocket into the hands of General Miles. We will wait until we see how the matter looks then."

This was a long time to wait. Lieutenant Parker was anxious that something should be done at once; but Carl kept his horse in a fast walk all the way—sometimes, when he got tired of that, letting him trot for a short distance, and Parker was obliged to keep pace with him.

"Don't be in too big a hurry," said the guide, who saw that Lieutenant Parker was slyly pricking his horse with the spur to make him go faster. "Let them go easy now, and save their speed for by and by."

The guide relapsed into silence, but at the same time his eyes were busy. He kept a

close watch over the summit of the neighboring swells to make sure that they had not been seen by some of Sitting Bull's couriers, who were on the lookout for them to find out where they went. As soon as they found out that the guide and his companion were headed toward Fort Yates they would get ahead of them, and so post the Sioux in regard to their coming. Grand River, which lay immediately across their path, was the permanent camp of the Sioux. Beginning on the right, at the mouth of the river, there was Antelope's camp, Grand River school, Sitting Bull's camp, Bull Head's camp, Pretty Bird's camp, and Spotted Horse's camp; and by going farther up the river there was Thunder Hawk's camp. It did not seem possible that they could get through there without being seen by somebody. And these camps extended for seventy-five miles along the course of the river. Of course Lieutenant Parker did not know this, but the guide did; and, while he kept his gaze wandering over the tops of the hills, he was thinking up some plan by which he might cross the river, get

through their lines, and take the trail of fifty miles to the fort. The Grand River school seemed to him to be the best place.

"I wish I knew just what is going on in that camp," said he, after thinking the matter all over. "Kicking Bull has come up here from the Cheyenne reservation to teach Sitting Bull's followers the dance, and I would really like to know if he is at it to-night. If he is, we can get across the river anywhere; but if he is not engaged in teaching them, the different camps will be full of Indians, and we shall be seen as surely as we come out of the water. Don't you wish you had stayed at home?"

"That is a pretty question for you to ask," returned Lieutenant Parker indignantly. "Somebody has got to do it, and I don't see why I can't."

The guide relapsed into silence again, and for long hours neither of them said a word. Nothing was heard except the faint swishing of the buffalo grass as the horses brushed it aside with their legs, and the faint tread of the animals' feet upon the sand. Finally the guide allowed his horse to gallop, and

that was a great relief to Lieutenant Parker's feelings. And one thing which surprised Parker was the ease with which Carl's horse kept up. No matter how fast he went he was always within Parker's reach. Thus walking and galloping by turns, the hours passed away much sooner than Parker had thought possible, and finally, to his immense satisfaction, the guide pulled up his horse and began to look about him.

"There ought to be a school-house over there," said he.

"Why, are we at the river?" asked Parker.

"It is only about twenty feet ahead of you. Do you hear any yells anywhere?"

"Nothing but the coyotes."

The guide listened a moment, and then turned his horse and rode down the stream, Lieutenant Parker keeping close at his heels. Presently he turned again and rode down the bank, and then there was the splashing of water beneath his horse's hoofs. The ford was a shallow one, and how Carl had struck it in that darkness was a marvel. It continued for perhaps five minutes, and then Parker

felt himself mounting the opposite bank. He stopped his horse when his guide did and listened intently, but he heard no sound of any kind.

"Now, sir, you may go as fast as you please," said Carl.

"How far is the fort from here?"

"About fifty miles."

"But the Sioux will hear us."

"No, they won't. They are off somewhere attending that Ghost Dance."

Lieutenant Parker waited to hear no more. If his guide thought it safe to go with the full speed of their horses it was nothing to him. He drew up on the reins, touched his horse with his spurs, and went away like the wind.

CHAPTER VIII.

COMING OUT.

THIS was the first race that Lieutenant Parker and Carl, the Trailer, had ever engaged in, and if there had not been so much at stake they would have thoroughly enjoyed it. For miles they kept going at the top of their speed, and then, to Parker's amazement, his horse fell behind and required constant spurring to make him keep up. After they had gone half the distance to the fort, Parker reluctantly drew rein and gave up the contest.

"That is one thing at which you can beat me," said he. "I had no idea that that nag of yours could show so much lightness of foot."

"It is always so when a fellow brings out Eastern horses to beat them," said the guide. "You take a race of five miles, and the Eastern horse will beat; but you take a race of

twenty miles, and it is safe to back the endurance of the pony."

"Then I wouldn't stand much of a show with the Sioux in a fair trial of speed," said Parker.

"Not if you had any distance to go. More than one fellow has been hauled off his Eastern horse and killed within sight of his friends. I remember hearing some trappers talk about it at the time of the Custer massacre. One fellow, who had a nice horse, happened to get away from the hostiles, and took out across the plains at the top of his speed, followed by six or seven of the savages. The Indians were going to give up after a while, but all of a sudden they saw the officer pull out a pistol and put it to his own head. You see, he knew what his fate would be if captured. That is the only time I ever heard of an Eastern horse beating a pony."

Lieutenant Parker was not very well pleased with such talk as this. It reminded him too much of what might be his own case if he ever got into a race with the Indians. Lieutenant Kidder and band, who had been

overtaken and annihilated by some of the same Indians among whom he was going, had tried on American horses to escape the death they saw threatening them, but after a race of fifteen miles the ponies came up, and it was all over with them. He did not ask any more questions after that until his guide pointed out something on the top of a distant swell. He looked, and there were the walls of the fort in plain sight; and scarcely had this thought passed through his mind when he heard a voice directly in front of him saying:

“Halt! Who comes there?”

“An officer without the countersign,” replied Parker.

“Halt, officer. Dismount. Corporal of the guard!—Number 6.”

Lieutenant Parker and his guide dismounted, and in a few minutes the corporal came up, bringing a lantern to assist him in making out who the visitors were.

“I have been sent here with dispatches for General Miles,” said the young officer. “I am Lieutenant Parker, and this man is my guide.”

"Well, I guess you are all right, so you can come on," said the corporal. "How did you get through the Sioux lines, sir?"

"We did not have any trouble with the Sioux at all," said Parker. "I guess that Kicking Bull is holding a Ghost Dance somewhere, is he not? We listened, but we heard no yelling."

"That's where he is now, sir; but the agent sent to him to give up the man, and old Bull told him that he was going to send him home. But what's the use of that, sir? The Indians will learn all they want to know in that time, and they can go on with the dance without his help."

When Lieutenant Parker followed the corporal through the gate, which stood wide open, he kept his eyes on the watch for some of those wily Sioux braves who were there to apprise Sitting Bull of their coming, but he saw none. In fact he had not seen a Sioux Indian since he left Fort Scott. He began to breathe a good deal easier.

"I believe we can go out as we came in," said he in a low voice to his guide. "The

Indians are all away learning the Ghost Dance, and there is not one of them here to carry the news to headquarters."

"I hope it is so, but I am afraid it isn't," said Carl. "Some brave, somewhere, has seen us come in here, and when we are ready to go out he will have help enough to stop us."

Parker sent in his name by the orderly who stood in front of the general's door, who in a few moments came out, again, with an invitation to the lieutenant to step inside. Parker obeyed, and presently found himself in the company of an elderly gentleman who had evidently just got up out of a warm bed, for his hair was all rumpled up, and he had thrown on a dressing-gown which enveloped him from his head to his heels.

"I believe I have seen you before, Lieutenant Parker," said the general, taking the papers which were handed him.

"Yes, sir; that was when you ordered me to report to Colonel Dodge of the —th Cavalry."

"Well, you found it a good place, didn't you?"

“Yes, sir. That is, it is well enough now.”

“What do you mean by *now*?”

“I mean, sir, that the colonel has got so that he can trust me, and he sends me out on little expeditions—like this one, for instance.”

“Oh,” said the general with a smile. “Well, you live up to your full duty while you are in garrison and I will answer for it that you will see plenty of service of this kind.”

The general then opened the dispatches, and when he had got a page half read he noticed that Parker was still standing, with his hat in his hand, and he told him to sit down, at the same time offering a slight apology for his neglect. The lieutenant thanked him and took a chair, running his eye over the articles of furniture with which the general had thought it necessary to surround himself, and he made up his mind that the officer was not as fond of hunting as his colonel was. There were no weapons to be seen, and not a stuffed head of antelope or buffalo did he see to remind him of the plains.

“Now, lieutenant, I shall want you to have

my answer in your colonel's hands as soon as possible," said the general. "Do you want some refreshments—you or your men?"

"No, sir. We brought in our pockets a bite to eat. I have but one man with me."

The general did not say anything more. He did not express surprise that Parker had come away from the fort with only a guide, for he evidently thought that was the way to do. He wrote rapidly for fifteen minutes, and when the dispatch was completed he handed it to the young officer and said: "There you are, sir. Good luck to you," and his interview with the general was completed.

"He is a man after my own heart," said Parker, when he came up to the place where the guide was standing, holding the horses. "There is the officer of the day at the gate. Let us ask him to pass us out."

This was easily done, and the boys mounted their horses and turned their faces homeward. It was now broad daylight, and Lieutenant Parker wondered how they were going to slip by the Indians unperceived. It depended upon where the Indians were. If they were

still interested in their Ghost Dance, they could cross the river without being seen by anybody ; but if they were done with it and were at home, they would be discovered and stopped. He thought at first that he would see what Carl thought about it ; but on looking toward him he found that he was engaged in filling up his pipe, and was going to indulge in a smoke.

“ I believe I will not say anything to him about it,” said Parker. “ When he is ready to tell me, well and good ; but I don’t care to let him see how ignorant I am.”

And the guide did not get ready to broach the subject until they had passed over the fifty miles that lay between them and the river, and were drawing near to the school-house. It was a barren-looking place, with no flowers or shade-trees around it, and it was not such a spot as would have been chosen for a place of learning in a civilized country. There was no school in session now, for, their parents being deeply interested in the Ghost Dance, the children could not be expected to learn anything ; and, furthermore, they had

to go to the new camp with their elders. As Parker looked at the house he was certain that he saw a head thrust carefully around it and then as quickly withdrawn. He glanced at his guide and was satisfied that he had seen it, too, but his face never changed color.

"It is all up with us," he said coolly.

"What do you mean by that?" asked Parker; and although he intended that his voice should be firm, it trembled a little in spite of himself.

"It means that we are captured; at least I am, but you can go where you please," said the guide.

"Good heavens! Let us fight!" exclaimed the lieutenant; and in an instant he had thrown his Winchester up to his shoulder and held it in position.

"Put up your gun," said Carl sternly. "If there is one Indian there, there are a dozen. Besides, the report of your rifle would bring the whole camp on us. Every one of those tepees out yonder has two or three Indians in it, sleeping soundly."

"How do you know?"

“Why, haven’t you seen the women looking out once in a while? Of course they know that we are coming, and depend on those fellows behind the school-house to capture us. Now, when I am gone——”

Carl was about to go on and give his companion some minute instructions as to the course he must pursue in order to reach the fort, but just then, as they went rapidly along the road which ran close by the side of the school-house, half a dozen Indians, painted in all manner of grotesque shapes, suddenly sprang up from their place of concealment and made a wild dash for the guide’s horse. One seized his horse by the bridle, and another took hold of his gun, which was slung over his shoulder by a broad strap, and with a knife cut it loose from him. No attention was paid to Parker, who sat on his horse and wondered if the savages in a fight moved as quickly as these did.

“White soldier, you go on,” said one who seemed to be the leader of the assaulting party. “We want nothing to do with you.”

Lieutenant Parker turned and looked closely

at the speaker. The voice did not sound as though it came from an Indian, and when he had taken a second glance at him, Parker saw his white skin through the places where he had not been touched up by the paint. He was a squawman beyond doubt, and the lieutenant wondered what Carl had been doing to him to incur his enmity.

"Yes," said the guide, "you go on to the fort; I will have to stay here."

"Why, how in the world am I to find my way back there unless you go with me?" inquired Parker, who was amazed at the proposition.

"You can see the sun, can't you? Well, just keep it to your right and go ahead. Trust a little to your horse. He has been that way once, and he can follow his old trail back. Good-by."

"Good-by," said the squawman. "You have wasted time enough here already."

As if in answer to the threat implied by these words, two of the Indians raised their guns and pointed them at his head, and Parker, taking the hint, urged his horse for-

ward and began crossing the river. When he reached the opposite side he turned to look at Carl, and found that he and his captors were just disappearing behind the water oaks which lined the banks of the stream.

"Carl knew what he was talking about when he said that some brave, somewhere, had seen us go into the fort," thought the lieutenant, who was very much depressed by what had occurred. "But it beats me how he got into trouble with that squawman. Carl never associated with such fellows as those. They have got him, and now the next thing is to find out what they are going to do with him. I must see the colonel about it as soon as possible."

Parker's first care was to sling his Winchester over his shoulder, and his second to put his hands into his pockets. He remembered how he had drawn that rifle to his face and pointed it at an imaginary Indian who would attempt to rush upon him, and here he had gone and surrendered to half a dozen savages who took his guide away from him. He was fairly disgusted with himself when he thought

of it. Why did he not make a fight, as he had wanted to do?

"Perhaps it is just as well for me that I didn't," said Parker to himself. "There must have been five hundred Indians in that camp, if they were all in their tepees, and of course I couldn't hold my own with them. If I ever reach the fort, which is extremely doubtful, Randolph will make no end of fun of me."

By casting his eyes a little in advance of him Parker could see that his horse was following the old trail that he had made some hours before. He could easily tell it, for there were two trails, the grass all pressed down and leaning in the opposite direction, and it had been made while the dew was on. He came along there in the night, but how would it be when they reached the trail over which they had passed in the daytime? He could only wait and see.

CHAPTER IX.

STILL IN THE SADDLE.

THE long ride which followed was something that Lieut. Parker often thought of with a shudder. It is true that there were no wild animals to bother him—nothing but the coyotes, which gathered around him and kept pace with him almost to the fort; but the thought that he was alone on the plains and the uncertainty of what the Sioux intended to do with his guide troubled him more than anything else. As darkness came on apace, and the wolves began to howl all about him, Parker drew rein on the opposite bank of a small stream and allowed his horse to graze and recover his “second wind,” for he had been riding rather rapidly of late, being anxious to get over as much of the trail as he could before the gloom came to shut it out from his view, and now he began to think of that envelope he had in his pocket.

“Isn’t it lucky that the squawman did not say anything to me about that dispatch?” said the lieutenant to himself. “Suppose he had asked me to give it up to him? Would I have done it? I guess not. Nobody sees the inside of that envelope unless he takes it off my dead body.”

After passing half an hour in this way, Parker watered his horse and again set out for the fort. The animal went along as lively as ever, and during the whole of that night Parker rode with his hands in his pockets, and never touched the reins at all. The way seemed to have no end; but just as he was forgetting his troubles and his head began to bend forward, as if he were almost asleep, his horse broke into a gallop and began to neigh. Almost at the same instant a voice close in front challenged him.

“I declare, I am pretty close to the fort,” said Parker; and it was all he could do to keep from yelling. “An officer without the countersign,” he said, in reply to the sentinel.

The lieutenant was so anxious to see the colonel, and tell him of what had happened back

there in the Sioux camp, that it seemed as though the corporal never would come; but he made his appearance at last, and the first thing he did was to recognize his own officer.

"Why, lieutenant, I am glad to see you again, sir," said he, extending his hand, "but I don't see Carl, the Trailer, with you."

"He stopped back there in the Sioux camp," said Parker. "I tell you I am tired," he added, seeing that the corporal opened his eyes and was about to speak. "I want to get to bed as soon as possible."

The colonel got up from a sound sleep to read the dispatches, and the young officer stood by, whirling his hat in his hand and waiting impatiently until he got through; and when the colonel looked up and was about to tell him to go to his quarters, for he had done with him for the night, he noticed that Parker looked very solemn.

"What is the matter with you?" he asked pleasantly.

"Matter enough, sir," replied the lieutenant. "I have lost my guide and you have lost a scout."

Without waiting for an invitation, Parker went on and told his companion what had happened at the Grand River school. The colonel looked grave, and settled back in his chair as though he did not know what to make of it.

"And you came on alone?" he said, when Parker finished his story.

"Yes, sir; but my horse picked out the way. When it grew dark I could not see my hand before me."

"Well, go to your quarters now, and get all the sleep you want. We will talk the matter over again in the morning."

"That is a pretty way to treat a man who is in danger of his life," said Parker to himself as he went out to put up his horse. "If I had been dead it would have been the same thing."

Of course there was great excitement among the officers and men of the garrison when it became known that Carl, the Trailer, had been captured by the Sioux in broad daylight and Lieutenant Parker left to find his way to the fort alone. They did not know which to

wonder at the most—Parker's knowledge of "plainscraft," or the audacity of the Indians in making a capture almost within reach of the fort, and when they were not on the war-path. And then there was the squawman. It was a great marvel to the officers how Carl became acquainted with a person so low down in the world, but the colonel thought he knew. He sent for the lieutenant immediately after breakfast and asked him to go over his story again. This time all the ranking officers of the garrison were present in his room.

"Are you sure you saw but one squawman in the party that assaulted you?" asked the colonel, after Parker had gone over his adventure for the second time.

"I saw but the one, sir," said Parker, "and I wouldn't have known what he was if it had not been for his voice."

"I will wager that there were two of them there," said the commanding officer. "You see," he added, turning to his officers, "there used to be two hard characters in this country who were named Harding and Ainsworth, and they hired out to Carl's father to herd

cattle for him. They understood their business, but Mr. Preston thought that it would be well worth while to watch them. One night he detected them robbing him, and he shot both of them; but they made out to get away in spite of their wounds. One would think that they would go as far from this country as they possibly could, but it seems that they had friends among the Sioux, and right there was where they went. They sent word to Preston where they were, adding that they were waiting an opportunity to take revenge upon him. They said they were waiting for a chance to wipe out the entire family."

"But do you suppose that is the only thing they have in mind, sir?" asked the major. "Don't you imagine that there is somebody who is going to step in and enjoy the property that Carl may leave behind him?"

"I have heard that hinted, too, but somehow I can't believe it," said the colonel. "Mr. Preston died a natural death, and if they make away with Carl, they will do away with the last one of the family. I do wish I could

get my hands on those men," added the officer, rising to his feet and walking back and forth in the room. "It does not make any difference where a man goes, he is bound to make some enemies if he is so fortunate as to fall into property. In the States they are jealous of him, and out here they want to kill him. If Carl was a poor man those squawmen would not take the least notice of him."

It was evident that the colonel blamed himself for allowing Carl, the Trailer, to go off to Standing Rock Agency with Lieutenant Parker; but Carl had been off there a dozen times and came back safe, and he supposed he could keep on doing it. After taking a few turns up and down the floor he announced that he couldn't see any way out of it, and that all they could do would be to stay there in the fort and wait to see what was going to happen to Carl.

"I would like to take a few of my men and go up there and release him," said he, once more seating himself in his chair, "for somehow I am as much interested in that boy as though he were my own. But you see I can't

stir without orders. If I go up there it will bring on a fight, sure."

The colonel rested his elbows upon his knees, gazed fixedly at the floor for a few minutes, and then raised his eyes and fastened them upon Lieutenant Parker.

"I will tell you what I might do," said he. "I could make out a report to General Miles, and request that he make a demand on the Sioux for Carl, the Trailer. In that way I can get him."

The officers all drew a long breath of relief, for they were thinking about that very thing themselves.

"What do you say, Parker? Can you make that trip to Standing Rock Agency and back without a guide?"

"Yes, sir," replied the lieutenant promptly. "I will start this afternoon."

"I won't ask you to do it so soon as that," said the colonel with a smile. "I will relieve you of all duty to-day, and to-morrow you and your horse will be rested up and fit to make the journey. Come to me to-morrow afternoon at four o'clock."

The colonel arose, and the officers took up their hats and bowed themselves out. They all laughed as they extended their hands to Parker.

"I wouldn't mind being in your place myself," said the major. "You are going to get up a reputation as a scout. You won't have any use for Carl when he gets back."

"I will be glad to take that report to General Miles, because I want to do something for Carl," said Parker. "He got into trouble through me, and I want to get him out."

After exchanging a few words with each of the officers, Parker went into his own quarters, where he found his room-mate waiting for him. He had not been summoned into the colonel's presence with his comrades, but he knew he would hear the full report when the lieutenant came out.

"Well?" said Randolph, as Parker drew off his shoes and stretched himself out on his bed.

"Well," said Parker, "it is going to be just as the major says. I am going to get up a reputation as a scout. I am ordered to

report to the colonel to-morrow afternoon at four o'clock."

"Where are you going?" asked Randolph.

"To Fort Yates."

"Who are you going to take as your guide?"

"I am going alone," said the lieutenant proudly.

"Well, I shall not bid you good-by as I did the last time you went, for like as not you will come back all right."

"I hope to, certainly," said Parker with a smile. "The Sioux will not bother me. That squawman told me so."

"I would not place too much dependence on that squawman," said Randolph. "If it suits him to lie about it, he is going to do it."

"I shall go right ahead as though there were no Sioux there. That is the way that Carl did."

Lieutenant Parker did not sleep much that day, for he was too busy thinking about what the future might have in store for him. After rolling and tossing on his bed for an hour, he went out to see about his horse. The animal

was his main dependence now. If he missed the trail and wandered away on the plains, he might never find the fort. The horse was hitched out in the middle of the stable, and Sergeant Leeds, his coat off and sleeves rolled up, was busily engaged in cleaning him off.

"I thought you would not object, sir, seeing that the beast's feet and legs were covered with dust," said he.

"I am much obliged to you," said the lieutenant. "I came out to do that myself. He has got to take me to Fort Yates to-morrow."

"Will you take your company with you, sir? I could really enjoy a ride of two hundred miles."

"I am sorry that I can't take anybody. I shall go alone."

"Alone, sir? Why, there is every chance in the world for you to get lost."

"I came from Grand River alone after dark," said Parker.

"Well, that's a heap more than I could do. The horse will be ready when you want him."

Sergeant Leeds continued his work with a despondent look on his face, and Parker went

out, feeling in all his pockets for a piece of loose change. But the paymaster was not due yet, and, like all young officers, the lieutenant had managed to get rid of his money over the sutler's counter.

"I'll bet you I don't spend my next quarter's salary with him," muttered Parker, as he once more turned his steps toward his room. "The very time I need money I have not got it."

The day wore away at last, however, and at precisely half-past four o'clock the lieutenant walked his horse up in front of the colonel's quarters, and leaving Sergeant Leeds to hold him, he went in and reported that he was ready.

"I don't feel exactly right in sending you off in this way," said the colonel, "but you are the only one who knows the route. You are sure you won't get lost?"

"Not if my horse knows the way."

"Well, there you are. Go on, and be back as soon as possible."

The lieutenant took the envelope, put it into his pocket, made a salute, and went out. He shook hands with Sergeant Leeds, mounted his horse, and rode out of the parade-ground.

CHAPTER X.

THE SQUAWMAN'S PROPOSITION.

CARL, the Trailer, was sadly depressed when he saw Lieutenant Parker ride his horse into Grand River—not so much on his own account, but he was thinking of the dispatches which the latter carried in his pocket. Although he spoke encouragingly to him, he did not expect that the young officer would find his way through to the fort alone. The chances were that the horse would fail to follow his own trail, and perhaps take his rider a hundred miles out of his way. But these thoughts had barely passed through his mind when he was recalled to himself by the actions of the squawman. The latter took possession of the revolver which Carl carried in his hip pocket, and then seized him by the arm and pulled him to the ground.

“Don’t be so rough, if you please,” said

Carl indignantly. "I could have got down without any of your help."

"I suppose you could, but you see I wanted to help you down," replied the squawman with a grin. "You have stayed in this country just to see how this fight was coming out between your people and the Sioux, and you have stayed a little too long."

"Do you think there is going to be a fight?" said Carl. He listened for the squawman's reply, and he believed every word he said. Of course he was going to seek a chance to escape before long, and he wanted to take back with him some news for the colonel.

"A fight? Well, I should say so," said the squawman angrily. "Before it is over you and all the rest of the white people will be food for the wolves."

"You believe in the Ghost Dance, then? Don't pull me so hard; I can keep up with you."

"Of course I believe in it, and so does every man who has seen it. If I didn't believe in it, here's something that would set me all right."

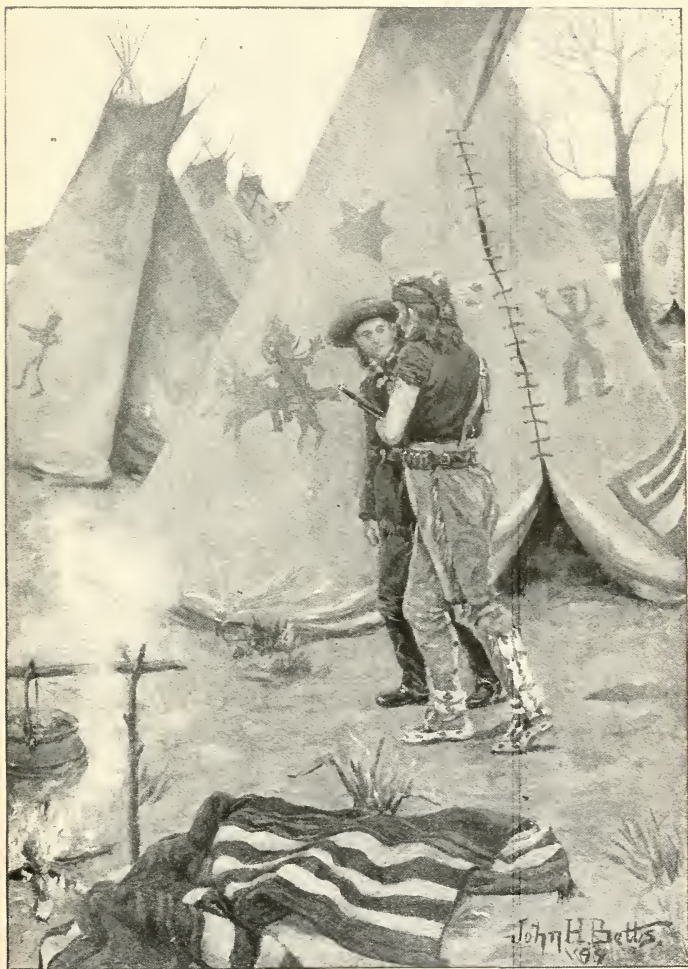
He bared his brawny arm up to the shoulder when he said this, and showed Carl the scar made by a bullet which had come very near ending his life.

"You see that, don't you?" said the squawman, fairly hissing the words through his teeth.

"Of course I see it. But you had no business to be caught robbing my father. I did not do it."

"I know you didn't; but I have got you now, and I intend to make use of you, too. Go in here."

The squawman paused in front of a tepee whose flap was wide open. Carl entered and found himself on the inside of an Indian house, and, although he had been in similar situations before, he did not see how any Indian tepee could be as dirty as this one was. The beds were scattered all over, for the Indian women had not yet found the time to gather them up, and on one of them lay half a dozen children fast asleep. Without an invitation he sat down on one of the beds and waited to see what the squawman was going to



CARL CAPTURED BY THE SQUAWMAN.

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do next. That worthy seemed to be in excellent spirits, and it was not long before the secret came out.

"Those women you saw outside don't all belong to me," said he, as he took his pipe from his pocket. "One of them is my wife, and the others belong to my partners, Ainsworth and Tuttle, whom your worthy general has got in limbo. You heard about our holding up that stage, didn't you?"

"Yes, I heard all about it. Some of you fellows shot the driver because he would not stop for you, and you stand a pretty good chance of having your necks stretched."

"That's what I was afraid of," said the squawman. "But you must not allow that to be done."

"I?" exclaimed Carl. "I can't help you any."

"Yes, you can. When the war was here—and I know about it, for I was on the Confederate side—they used to exchange prisoners, didn't they?"

"I believe they did."

"Well, now, ever since those two fellows

were caught I laid out to capture you the first time you crossed the reservation, and get you to write a letter to General Miles, telling him that if he would let those men go I would let you go. But first there has got to be some little business between us."

Carl leaned his head upon his hands, looked reflectively at the ground, and thought about it. What he had heard went a great way to convince him that his circumstances were not as bad as he thought they were. The squawmen had sent these threatening messages to his father during his lifetime, and he supposed that when he was captured there was nothing but death awaited him; but, somehow, General Miles had managed to capture two of the men who were given to holding up stage-coaches, and that had put a different view on the matter. This squawman—Harding, his name was—came to the conclusion that he had better go easy with Carl. He would offer to exchange him—one scout for two prisoners—and then he would be all right. He could afterward capture Carl, and do what he pleased with him. The scout saw through

his scheme as easily as the squawman did; and, furthermore, he was anxious to help it along. Very cautiously he let his hands drop until they rested on his breast. There was one thing upon which Carl congratulated himself at the time of his capture, and that was that the squawman did not attempt to search his clothes in the hope of finding more weapons. He thought that the rifle and single revolver were all he had; but stowed away in the inside pockets of his moleskin jacket were two revolvers which he thought might come handy in time. He could feel them now, as he allowed his hands to drop.

"Well, what are you thinking of?" asked Harding, as he lighted his pipe and sat down on a bed opposite to the one Carl occupied. "You can write, can't you?"

"Oh, yes, I can write, but I don't know that it will do any good," said Carl.

"I will bet you can put it down to him so that it *will* do some good," said the squawman with a hideous smile. "Suppose you tell him that the only scout he has got at Fort Scott stands a fair chance of being tied up to the

stake if he don't release my partners. What then?"

"Of course I can tell him all that, but you can make up your mind to be hanged if you are ever captured," said Carl. "Is there anybody here who can read writing?"

"Yes; there are three fellows here who used to go to school at Carlisle," said the squawman. "You see, after you have written the letter I will take it to them to see if you have read it to me right, and if you have I will send it off."

"It is lucky I spoke to you about that," said Carl to himself. "I'll write such a letter as I am willing those Carlisle fellows should read. Do they, too, believe in the Ghost Dance?" he added aloud.

"I tell you that everybody believes in it who has seen it," returned the squawman. "Everything goes to prove that it is a part of the religion that the white folks have got up for themselves."

"In what way does it prove it?" asked the scout. He had a chance now to learn something about the Ghost Dance. He was more

interested in it than he was in effecting his escape.

"Why, this earth is going to be destroyed," said Harding. "It is all worn out now, the buffalo and all the other game is gone up, and we are going to have it new, as it was before the white folks came here and spoiled it all for us. Those who don't believe in the Ghost Dance will all be killed by a fire or an earthquake or something, and those who believe enough in it to wear their ghost shirts will be saved."

"What is that about the ghost shirts?" said Carl; for you must remember that what this squawman said was all news to him.

"Hold on and I will show you one," said Harding. "You must say nothing to nobody about it, for if you do, the shirt will not be of any use to me."

"Oh, I will say nothing about it," said the scout with a laugh. "I shall not get a chance. If the general will not exchange those two prisoners for me, I shall be in a bad fix."

"Won't you, though?" said the squawman with a grin. "You will be gone up, sure.

However, it will give you a little chance for your life."

"You bet it will," said Carl mentally. "While you are waiting for your letter from General Miles, I will be looking out for an opportunity to escape."

The squawman went to one side of the tepee, and after removing the iron kettle which contained what was left of the breakfast and kicking aside a few old pots and pans, he finally drew out a buffalo bag that contained one thing that he prized above everything else upon earth. In a few minutes he drew out the ghost shirt, and held it up so that Carl could have a fair view of it. The garment was made of a light buckskin, sewed with deer sinew, and cut in the form of all the Indians' hunting-shirts. The outside of it was ornamented with rude pictures representing buffalo, deer and ravens, who seemed to be in full flight.

"Now, when we get this on, the white man's rifle won't amount to a row of pins," said the squawman. "The weapon will refuse to fire, or the bullet in it will be turned aside and drop to the ground."

"Who told you all this?" asked Carl.

"The medicine man ; and he is the one that prayed to the Messiah while they were on their way home, and he set them miles ahead on their journey."

Carl did not say anything, but his thoughts were busy. What a pity it was, he thought, that Ainsworth and Tuttle did not have on those ghost shirts when General Miles' force came up with them.

"You see it is sewed with sinew," said the squawman, "and that proves that we must not take anything into the dance that the white man has made. We can wear anything that we have made ourselves, but nothing else."

"Do you think you are going to whip the white man?"

"Not unless we have to."

"And when you do whip him," continued Carl, "you will have to use the weapons he made for you, will you not?"

"Well, that is a different thing," said the squawman, after thinking a moment. "Of course we will have to use the weapons he made for us, and why not? He brought all

this trouble upon us, and we would show ourselves lacking in sense if we didn't use his own weapons upon him."

"You say your shirt would not be of any use to you if you were known to have shown it to a white man," said Carl. "How do you make that out?"

"All I know is what the medicine man told us," said the squawman, packing his garment away again in its dried buffalo skin. "We are going to whip them easy when we put our shirts on, but we don't want your folks to know anything about it."

"Well, before I write that letter to General Miles you say you have some business to transact with me," Carl reminded him. "What is it?"

"It is this," said the squawman, seating himself once more on the bed. "You have got lots of cattle there, more than you need, and I want you to write me out a bill of sale for a thousand head."

"What will be the use of that? You will not want the cattle until this fight is over."

"I know that; but if anything should

happen, and our medicine man should be mistaken, we want to get the cattle without any trouble. You have left men on your ranch to protect them."

"Of course I have, and they will shoot down anybody who comes around there fooling with the stock. But your medicine man won't be mistaken. The grass is not green yet."

"No, but our medicine man sees that our people are getting impatient, and he has agreed to shorten the time of the Messiah's coming until this winter. That is why we are keeping up the dance so long—just to show him that we are ready for him as soon as he wants to come."

Carl was astonished, for he had never heard that there were people who could bring the world to an end whenever they pleased. While he was thinking about it a shrill voice on the outside of the tepee set up a shout, and the squawman jumped to his feet and went to the flap of the door to listen. In a short time he came back again, after speaking a few words to the women who stood close about the tepee, and said :

“It has come at last.”

“What do you mean? The fight?”

“Oh, no. We have got orders to pack up our houses and move up to the dance-ground.”

CHAPTER XI.

THE INDIAN POLICEMEN.

FOR a few minutes there was great commotion among some of the women in camp, a few making preparations to strike tents, and the rest hurrying off to saddle their husbands' horses. The braves did not do anything except bring their weapons out of the tepees and stand by until their nags were brought up. Carl, seeing that no attention was paid to himself, went out of the tepee and took his stand by the squawman's side.

"Do you see those men who are sitting in front of their wigwams smoking their pipes?" said Harding. "Well they are those who don't believe in the Ghost Dance. The soldiers say they don't want them to engage in it, and that is enough for them."

"They will be saved when the world comes to an end as well as those who do believe in it, will they not?" said Carl.

“Not much, they won’t,” answered the squawman indignantly. “This world is going to be destroyed and a new one made in the place of it; and those men, who are perfectly willing that the whites should come here and steal all their land and drive away the buffalo, will go somewhere, and no one will ever see them again.”

“Where’s my horse?” asked Carl suddenly. “Or are you going to leave me here?”

“Not as anybody knows of,” said the squawman with a laugh. “You must go on with me up to the other camp. I have been trying for a long time to get hold of you, and now that I have got you I am going to hold fast to you.”

“How far is that camp from here?”

“About thirty-five miles.”

“Did you tell one of the women to saddle my horse?”

“No, because the horse don’t belong to me. The one who took your horse by the bridle and stopped you is the one who laid claim to the horse.”

“And who has my rifle and revolver?”

“They went to some others of the party. Oh, you will never see them again.”

Carl was not much disappointed to hear this. He knew that his valuables were all gone, having become the property of those who helped capture him, but there were certain other things he had that he intended to hold fast to—the revolvers in the breast of his jacket. So long as they were not discovered and taken away from him he would not give up all hope of some day making a dash for his freedom.

“Have you not an extra horse, so that I can ride?” asked Carl.

“No; the women have got all the rest—and they need them, too. You will have to walk; I don’t see any way for you to get around it.”

The horse of the sqawman had by this time been brought up, and he swung himself into the saddle, first making a motion to Carl to keep close by his side. As they got a little way out of the camp Carl saw that the crier’s voice had been obeyed, for they fell in behind a long row of Indians who were already taking

their way toward the new camping-ground. They were mostly braves, the women having been left behind to strike the tepees. The squawman did not exchange a word with any of them, and neither did Harding converse with him as freely as he had done heretofore. He did not want to let the bucks see how familiar he was with a prisoner.

The boy was not accustomed to travelling so far on foot, and before their journey was ended he was about as tired as he could well be. At length, to his immense relief, he discovered the camp within plain sight of him. It was situated on a plain which seemed to have no end, with high rolling hills on three sides of it, and on the outskirts were several "sweat-houses" in which the braves purified themselves while making ready for the dance, and in the centre was perhaps a quarter of an acre of ground on which the grass was completely worn off. This had been done by the braves while learning the Ghost Dance from Kicking Bull. There were a large number of tepees scattered around the edge of the plain, but Carl had witnessed the sight

so often that he barely took a second look at them. What he wanted was to get somewhere and sit down.

"I'll bet that the men who dance here will get dust enough in their mouths to keep them from telling the truth for months," said Carl. "Five days! That's a long time to keep it up."

"It is sometimes called the 'dragging dance,' said the squawman. The men get so tired after a while that they can't lift their feet. Now we will pick out a good place for my tepee, and then we will sit down. You act as though you were tired."

Harding kept on for half a mile farther, picked out a spot that would do him, dismounted, and pulled his never-failing pipe from his pocket. Carl thought he could enjoy a smoke and passed his tobacco-bag to the squawman. The latter ran the weed through his fingers and praised its purity.

"We don't get any such tobacco out here," said he. "We have to eke it out by smoking bark with it. Say, Carl, how much do you get for scouting for that fort?"

"I don't get anything," said Carl.

"Do you get up at all hours of the night and run around for that man for nothing?" asked the squawman in astonishment.

"Oh, that's no trouble. When I want money I can easily get it."

"That is what comes of your having more money than you want," said Harding; and it was plain that he was getting angry over it. "If I had one quarter of what you have got, I would leave this country altogether."

It was useless for Carl to tell the squawman that the only way for him to get money was to go to work and earn it, for he had tried that plan on him while he was herding cattle for his father; so he said nothing. He leaned his elbows on his knees and watched the women as they came up and selected places for their tepees. When the squawman's was put up, Carl found that he was in a position to see the Ghost Dance without going away from it. He would learn something more about it, then.

"Have your women got your tepee all fixed?" asked Carl. "Well, I am hungry."

The squawman was hungry himself, and he had ordered the fire to be built and the iron pot to be placed over it. By the time that Harding had smoked his pipe he arose to his feet with the remark that he guessed grub was about ready, and went into the tepee. Carl kept close at his heels, and found that the iron pot had been removed from the fire and set in the middle of the tepee, with two wooden spoons beside it. The squawman took one, while Carl took the other and began to fish what he liked best from out the pot. That was all they had. The meat had been fresh the day before, but it had been cooked so many times that there was scarcely anything left of it. But he made a pretty good meal after all, and when he had satisfied his appetite he filled his pipe, lighted it with a brand from the fire, and went outside to enjoy it.

“I wouldn’t be at all uneasy if I knew where Lieutenant Parker is at this moment,” thought he, seating himself on a grassy mound beside the tepee. “I wonder if that horse has sense enough to follow his own trail back to

the fort? And why didn't they capture him, too, when they took me? I guess the squawman let him go."

While he was busy thinking in this way Harding came out, followed by his wife.

"I am going up to sweat myself, to make myself ready for the Ghost Dance which will come off to-morrow," said he. "Don't attempt any nonsense now. These women will keep their eyes on you."

"Why can't you let me go with you?" asked Carl. "I want to see what you do in that sweat-box."

"Well, I think on the whole that you had better stay here," said Harding. "The bucks don't like your kind any too well——"

"Why, that ought not to make any difference with them," said Carl, who was evidently astonished at the squawman's words. "I can see some of them here that have eaten more than one meal at my father's house. They ought to think well of our family for that."

"That does not make any difference. You belong to a class that has humbugged them

all the way through, and there are men here in the party who have sworn to kill every paleface they meet. So I guess you had better stay here."

Carl had no idea of attempting to escape while the squawman was in the sweat-box. There were too many bucks all around him; and, besides, he had some preparations to make. He wanted to get rid of his boots and borrow a blanket to conceal his moleskin suit. Thus equipped, he believed that when the Ghost Dance was at its height he could slip away, and those who met him on the road, seeing nothing but the moccasins he wore and the blanket wrapped around his head, would surely take him for one of their own number and say nothing to him. He believed that he would try it, anyway.

"The only question is in regard to these women," soliloquized Carl. "If they get excited and go down there to see the dance, I can make it. If I once get over these hills they will never see me again. But suppose I am overtaken? Well," he added, clutching his hands about his revolvers, "I won't be

tied to the stake without some of them going with me."

Carl glanced at the women and saw that they had seated themselves opposite to him, and, wrapped up in their blankets, appeared to take no notice of anything; but he knew better than to attempt anything while they were on watch. They sat side by side, but never exchanged words with each other. The day and night wore on until it was twelve o'clock, but still no sounds came from the camp. Finally Carl grew tired of doing nothing and went into the tepee. He picked out a bed, the most comfortable one in the lot and as far away from the others as he could get it, and stretched himself out upon it. He thought of Lieutenant Parker, wondered what the Ghost Dance was going to be, and then passed off into the land of dreams.

Morning came at length, and Carl raised himself on his elbow to find the squawman fast asleep on a bed by his side. He got up and went to the door to examine things. He saw that some changes had been made in the dancing-ground since he slept. A tree, de-

nuded of all its branches except near the top, had been erected near the centre, and there was a staff, with a polished buffalo-horn on one end and a plumed horse-tail on the other; a bow with its bone arrows and a gaming wheel with its accompanying sticks were made fast below it. But prominent among all was something that attracted Carl's attention and drew from him a sneer of disgust. It was the Star-Spangled Banner.

"I don't see what the Government has done to be insulted in this way," said he. "I think they had better leave that thing out."

For want of something better to do Carl filled his pipe, and sat there and smoked it. There were a few braves stirring about with nothing on hand to do, and now and then one came out of his tepee and started toward the sweat-boxes. He was going to prepare himself for the dance. For an hour Carl sat there waiting for something to happen, and during that time the camp became thoroughly awake. One of the women came to the door and motioned him to enter—a sign that his breakfast was ready. The squawman still lay

asleep on the bed, but the kettle had been taken off the fire and occupied its usual place in the centre of the tepee.

"This meat is not half done," said Carl, trying to scoop up a piece from the middle of the pot. "You ought to be at our camp for a little while. They would show you how to cook a breakfast."

While Carl was engaged in lighting his pipe at the fire, a commotion suddenly arose in the camp. It did not take the form of yells, as it usually did, but there were subdued growls and the scurrying of feet hurrying toward the dancing-ground. Carl wanted to see what was the matter, and so he hastened out. The dancing-ground was alive with Indians, all thoroughly armed, who stood watching the approach of three horsemen coming toward them. Carl felt for his binoculars, but they were away, keeping company with his horse and rifle.

"Those are Indian policemen, if I ever saw them," said he. "What do they want here? If I could only make them see me. Eh? What do you want?" he added, turning fiercely

upon one of the Indian women who seized him by the arm and tried to draw him inside the tepee. "Get away."

Carl abruptly thrust out his foot and tumbled the woman over backwards. She fell all in a heap, but at the same time she uttered a yell so loud and piercing that it straightway aroused the squawman, who came out with a rush.

CHAPTER XII.

MORE COURIERS.

“IF Tuttle was here now he would play smash with you for serving his woman in that way,” said Harding, laying a heavy hand upon Carl’s arm and jerking him toward the tepee. “Get inside, where you belong.”

Carl went because he could not help himself, and the door was closed behind him. He was alone in the tepee, the squawman and the women having stayed outside to see what was going to happen. Carl wanted to see, too, and by looking around the tepee he found a place where the skins of which it was formed had not been stitched as closely together as they ought to have been, or, if they had been, the constant moving of the tepee had drawn them apart. It did not take him long to make this hole larger than it was, and by placing his eyes close to it he found that he could see everything that happened on the

dancing-ground. The braves were still huddled together awaiting the approach of the three horsemen, and finally they began shouting at them and waving their guns; but the police did not stop. They were under orders which must be obeyed. When they came up with the braves the spokesman of the three began a speech to which the Indians paid no attention. They began yelling as soon as he began speaking, and for a few moments a great hubbub arose. In all his life on the plains Carl had never heard such a commotion before. Six or eight hundred Indians could easily drown out three men, and Carl could not hear a word they said. He expected every minute that some excitable young braves would shoot the policemen, but finally the latter gave it up and turned their horses toward the fort. Carl was greatly disappointed. He left the side of the tepee and seated himself on the bed, and a moment later the door opened and the squawman came in.

"That was one time they did not make it," said he, giving one of his hideous grins.

"What did they want?" said Carl.

"They wanted to know if Kicking Bull had gone home yet, and when somebody told them that he had, they gave us the agent's order to stop the Ghost Dance."

"Well, are the Indians going to do it?"

"Not much, they ain't. We did not come up here thirty-five miles for nothing. We have got the ground right here, we are away from everybody so that we can't disturb them, and we intend to go on with it."

"The next time the agent sends men here to tell you to stop the dance he will send an army with them."

"Let him. He will see some of the biggest fighting that he has ever seen yet. We shall be fighting for our religion, our homes, and all that is dear to us; and when men get that way, they generally stay until all are killed. Now I will lay down and have my sleep out."

"Are you not going in the dance?"

"I shall go in about the third day. By that time some of the men will grow tired and drop out, and I will take their place and stay till it ends."

"Must I stay in here all the time?"

“Oh, no. You can go out and sit down where you were before, but you had better take this blanket along with you and wrap it around your head so that you will be taken for an Indian. Now mind you, don’t attempt any more nonsense. These women know when you ought to come in, and the next time one of them takes you by the arm and motions toward the tepee you had better start. If you don’t, I’ll be after you.”

Carl took the blanket and went out; and for five long days, except the time he took to eat his meals and to sleep, he sat there with his blanket wrapped around his head and watching the Ghost Dance. To his surprise he could see nothing about it to excite so much admiration in the Sioux. When the braves got ready to begin the dance, a neatly-dressed young squaw walked up to the pole with a bow and four arrows in her hand. The arrows she shot to four different points of the compass—north, south, east and west. The warriors then separated and hunted up the arrows, which were bound into a bundle and tied to the pole. After that a medicine

man made his appearance, and surrounded by the warriors, of whom there were a dozen in all, began making a speech to them. This was called the small circle, the other Indians not having completed their "purification," which they did by going through the sweat-box.

The medicine man occupied nearly an hour in making his speech—they were at so great a distance from Carl that he could not understand what was said—and then somebody else took his place. It was a brave who had passed into a trance during their last dance. He must have seen some wonderful things while he was in the spirit world, for he occupied their attention for another hour, and then he, too, gave way to another. There was no yelling, except what the speakers made themselves, but all seemed to be deeply interested.

Finally the braves who had been in the sweat-box began to come out and join those about the pole, and at last the large circle was formed, and then began the dancing. They took hold of hands and began moving

around the circle from right to left, and this thing was kept up until the people grew so tired that they could scarcely walk. The old Indians, knowing that this was to be a dance of endurance, barely lifted their feet, while the young braves bounded into the air and tried in various ways to show their enthusiasm. In a short time the dust raised by the feet of the dancers arose in clouds so thick that Carl could hardly see the circle at all. When one showed signs of giving out the others would jerk him around the circle, until at last he sank down from utter exhaustion.

“Well, if this is all there is of the Ghost Dance I am going to bed,” said Carl about twelve o’clock that night. “It makes me tired to look at them.”

Carl had not neglected to keep his eye on the women, who had sat all that day watching the Ghost Dance, and he saw that they were watching him too. When he arose and went into the tepee they got up and followed him. The squawman was still stretched out on his bed slumbering heavily, and Carl wondered if he were trying to make up for the sleep he

would lose during the two days that he expected to pass in the dance.

The next morning, when Carl got up, he went to the door and looked out. The circle was there, larger than it was before, and some of the braves seemed to be pretty nearly exhausted. He noticed that there was not so much bounding into the air as he had observed the day before, the young braves who had indulged in that practice having got weary and given the dance up to somebody else.

"It is the same old dance," said Carl, going outside and seating himself on his favorite hillock. "The old men are in there yet, but the young ones have gone out. What a dust they raise! It is no wonder that the squawman called it the 'dragging dance.'"

He was getting tired of the Ghost Dance. He had nothing to do but sit there and look on. He thought that if some of the officers at the fort could have seen it they would not be so anxious to stop it, for the thing would die out of itself as soon as cold weather came. But then an Indian was long-winded. If his

medicine man had told him that the dance was to be continued for ten days, he would have found some way to get through with it. He heard a rustling in the tepee, and the squawman came out and stood beside him.

"Have you got a pair of moccasins that you can let me have?" asked Carl, remembering that he needed one thing more to complete his disguise. "This boot hurts my foot so that I can scarcely step on it."

"I reckon," said Harding, who turned about and went into the tepee again. He fumbled around there for awhile, and then came out with a pair of moccasins in his hand which he threw down beside Carl. "There is some foot-gear which my old woman made for herself to go into the Ghost Dance with. You may find them pretty large, but if you strap them up tight around the ankles I guess they will stay on. What do you think of the Ghost Dance?"

"Is that all there is to it?" asked Carl in reply.

"Why of course it is," said the squawman in surprise. "I think that if you kept up

that motion for five days you would think there was something to it."

"Do you want that I should tell you the truth?"

"Of course. I don't want you to lie to me."

"Well, I think it is the biggest fake that ever a party of men indulged in," said Carl, who did not expect that the squawman would take kindly to this criticism.

"You do? I have a good notion to choke you for saying as much."

"You wanted the truth, and now you have it. I would like to make you a bet. In less than a year you won't hear a thing of the Ghost Dance. Your religion will die out entirely."

"What makes you think so?" said the squawman, who seemed surprised to hear this.

"Because the Messiah won't come. The soldiers will come in here——"

"Oh, shut your mouth. The soldiers won't have a thing to do with it. If they come on us, we'll whip them in a way that will do their hearts good."

"You will see. If I see you at the end of a year——"

"You will not see me, unless that letter you write to the general brings my partners back to me."

"When do you want me to write that letter?"

"Just as soon as the Ghost Dance is over. You haven't got any paper with you?"

Carl replied that he had not.

"There is one man now in the dance who has got a lot of paper by him. As soon as he gets through I will go to him for some."

"That's all right," said Carl to himself. "Now I will tell you one thing, and that ain't two—you won't see me when this dance is over. I will be miles on my way toward Fort Scott. That is better," he added aloud. "These moccasins feel as though I had nothing on my feet."

Carl put his boots aside, filled his pipe, and once more turned his attention to the Ghost Dance. Harding also filled his pipe, but he did not sit down.

"You are going to see more of it, are you?" said Carl, as the squawman moved toward the dancing-ground. "Now, what is the reason I cannot go down there with you?"

“Your face is pretty brown, that is a fact, but it will hardly pass for an Indian’s face,” said Harding. “You will be safer where you are. Those bucks don’t like to have white folks see their dance.”

“That’s all right,” said Carl, as he stretched his moccasined feet before him and wondered how fast he could run if the Sioux got after him. “I’ll stay here till the women go away.”

That was a long time to wait, and Carl was so impatient to be doing something that it was all he could do to contain himself. He had his full disguise now, his moccasins and his blanket, and if he only had in his hand that Winchester rifle which the squawman had covered up in his bed before he left the tepee, and the shades of night were closing around him, he would not be caught as easily as he was before. The evening of the third day came around at last, and Harding began to strip himself for the dance. He had nothing on when he came out of the tepee except a colored woolen shirt, moccasins, and a pair of leggings which came up over his trousers.

"Now, Carl, I am off," said he. "Do you think I can stand it for two days?"

"I should think you might stand it as long as anybody," said Carl.

"I want to warn you that you must not think of running off while these women are here to watch you," said Harding earnestly. "You heard what a yell one of them could give. Well, if these two set up a yelp it will reach everybody. They will keep good watch on you while I am gone."

Carl made no reply, but sat there on his mound and saw the squawman and his wife go down to the dancing-ground; but he was all awake now, and ready to improve the first chance to seek safety in flight. But the trouble was, the two women were as watchful as ever. When he went into the tepee to get his meals or to go to sleep, his keepers were close at his heels. To save his life he could not get an opportunity to escape one moment from their vigilant eyes. The days wore on and at last the dance was completed, and with a long-drawn whoop the braves separated and all of them started for their tepees, some of them so

nearly overcome with exhaustion that they crawled on their hands and knees. The squawman came also, and he had to be helped by his wife. He went into the tepee and laid down, and Carl, feeling somewhat discouraged, followed him.

"That is one chance gone," said he, looking daggers at the two women who had watched him so closely "Now, when will I get another?"

An hour passed in this way and the camp was fast asleep—all except the woman who sat by the door, and who, save when she was relieved by the other woman, kept watch over him while he slept. Suddenly there was a commotion in the camp, and no one knew what had occasioned it. A wild whoop, followed by others at shorter intervals, rang out on the still air, bringing the squawman to his feet and sending him out at the door to listen. It turned out to be a courier of some kind, and he was detailing some news to the camp. The squawman listened intently, and then came back with the face of a demon.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE END OF SITTING BULL.

“**W**HAT is up?” demanded Carl, who raised himself on his elbow and looked at the man in surprise. He thought, from the look of his face, that something dreadful had happened.

“Young man,” replied Harding, coming close to the place where the scout lay, hissing out the words from between his clenched teeth and shaking both his brawny fists under his nose, “the English language is not strong enough to make me do this subject justice. You are at the end of your rope, and I would not give two cents for your life. Nobody knows, except the few who were with me when you were captured, that I have got you a prisoner here in the camp; but if one of those warriors chooses to split on me, you would be food for the wolves in less than half an hour.”

"Well, can't you tell me what is the matter?" exclaimed Carl, growing more surprised. "I haven't been doing anything."

"No, but your kind have. Sitting Bull is murdered—shot through the body by Bull Head and Red Tomahawk, who were men that he has led into action more than once."

A wonderful thrill went all through Carl Preston as he listened to these words. Sitting Bull was dead! How often had he wished for that very thing to happen, but he had never dreamed that it would be done by some of his own men. The squawman watched him closely to see how he took the news, but Carl never showed in his countenance what his feelings were. He could have listened to the worst news that any boy ever heard, but he wouldn't show it in his face.

"Why, how did it happen?" said he, knowing that he must say something.

"You know as much about it as I do," returned the squawman. "Now the next thing is——"

He turned and spoke some words to the Indian women; but Carl, although he had

been on the plains all his life, could not understand him. He hated an Indian as he hated nothing else on earth, and he had not taken the pains that some people do to acquire a knowledge of their language. But the Indian women understood him, and straightway set up a howl as if they had lost some of their friends. One would think they were professional criers who had been hired to shed abundant tears over Sitting Bull's untimely death.

"Can't you keep still for a minute?" shouted the squawman, shaking both his fists at the women, and forgetting in his excitement that he had been addressing them in their own language. "You two stay here and watch this prisoner while I go down and see how it all came about. You had better keep your eyes on him, for the Indians may come up and call for him at any moment."

The squawman plunged through the door and went out, but he left three excited women behind him. They wanted to learn the full particulars of the murder of Sitting Bull the same as the squawman did, but for a

time they kept their places on the bed, comparing notes with each other and howling alternately. Finally one arose to her feet and slipped through the door, and she had been gone but a little while before another went out.

"I tell you the time is coming for me to make a strike for freedom," soliloquized Carl, drawing his feet under him so that he could go out of the other side of the tepee if this one should follow the example of her comrades. "If I once get out of this tepee, I bet they will never see me again."

Carl did not know much about women, but he naturally judged of what he would have done himself if he were left with a task on his hands in which he was not particularly interested. He would not have sat there alone in suspense while all the rest of the camp, men, women and children, were out to hear the report of the scout and get all the news. She sat uneasily on her bed, but finally got up and went to the door. As she did so a long, mournful howl, followed by a chorus of yells which denoted that some of the tribe were

growing excited, came to her ears, and that was more than she could stand. In an instant she opened the door and went out.

Almost any one who was placed in Carl Preston's situation would have been thrown off his balance by this unlooked-for incident, coming as it did on the heels of his disappointment in regard to the Ghost Dance, but it had no effect upon the scout. His face never changed its color, and his hands never trembled a particle. Quietly he arose to his feet and approached the door. It was dark outside, and he could not see a single thing. The yells had ceased now, and the braves were listening to a speech from somebody.

"Now is my chance, if ever," said Carl, going back to the squawman's bed and hastily tumbling the buffalo robes and blankets aside. "If I stay here I will surely be staked out, and I believe I would rather die at once."

Carl speedily found the Winchester of which he was in search, together with a murderous-looking knife, which he proceeded to buckle around his waist. Then he caught up the rifle, drew his knife, and with two quick

steps approached the side of the tepee opposite the door. One slit with his knife and he was free; or at least he was free until the Sioux got after him and captured him. With long, noiseless strides he took his way over the hill in front of which the tepee was pitched, and then turned abruptly off to the right and followed a direction exactly contrary to the one in which he wanted to go. Fort Scott lay pretty near south of him, and he argued that when the Sioux came to pursue him, which would be in the course of a few minutes at the very farthest, they would turn in the direction of the fort. When they had given up the pursuit he would turn around and follow his rightful road.

Meanwhile the squawman, having left his prisoner, as he supposed, in safe hands, broke into a run, and arrived at the dancing-ground just as the medicine man began his speech. He was urging the warriors to take to the warpath immediately and avenge the death of Sitting Bull. For a time it seemed as though he would succeed in arousing the anger of the Sioux to fever heat; but when it

came right down to the point, their chief man was gone, and there was no one ready to take his place. After he got through, the scout, who had brought the news to the camp, took upon himself the part of orator. He gave a pretty strict account of the death of Sitting Bull, and we will go on and tell it in our own way, for it was a long time before Carl heard the truth of the matter.

It happened on the morning of December 14th, although the arrest was not made until the 15th. At that time a courier came from Grand River with the news that Sitting Bull had received an invitation to appear at Pine Creek Agency, for the Messiah was about to appear. Sitting Bull at once resolved to go, sending a request to his agent for permission to do so; but at the same time he saddled his horses, to be ready to take a long and hard ride in case that permission was refused. The agent saw that something must be done immediately, and he at once held a consultation with General Miles, during which it was decided that the arrest should take place on the 15th. The arrest was to be made by the Indian

police, assisted by a detachment of troops, who were to follow within supporting distance.

The next thing was to inform the police of what was expected of them. There was already a camp of twenty-eight policemen under Lieutenant Bull Head, a man of undoubted courage, and who afterward shot Sitting Bull, about forty miles from Standing Rock Agency; and couriers were at once dispatched in other directions to order the force to concentrate on Sitting Bull's house, so as to make the arrest on the following morning. This happened about sundown; but with loyal promptness the Indians mounted their horses, and by riding from one agency to another they collected forty-three trained and determined policemen to carry out their orders. In accomplishing this service Sergeant Red Tomahawk covered the distance of forty miles in four hours and a quarter; and another, Hawk Man, made a hundred miles in a roundabout way, over an unfamiliar road, in twenty-two hours. So it seems that those who found fault with the Indians' promptness did not know what they were talking about.

By daylight the next morning the policemen surrounded Sitting Bull's house. He had two log cabins built a few rods apart, and in order to make sure of their man eight Indians entered one house while ten went into the other, the rest remaining on guard outside. They found Sitting Bull asleep on the floor of the larger house. He was awakened, and told he was a prisoner and must go to the agency.

"All right," said Sitting Bull. "I will dress and go with you."

He then sent one of his wives to the other house to get some clothes that he intended to wear, and requested that his favorite saddle-horse might be made ready for him to ride; and this was done by the police. On looking around the house they found two rifles and several knives, which they took possession of.

Now Sitting Bull seems to have changed his mind, for he decided that he would not go with the police, after all. Probably one thing that forced him to come to this decision was the appearance of his son, Crow Foot, seventeen years of age, who urged his father to give the war-whoop and not stir one step.

“Father, you have often given the war-whoop; give it now, when there are two hundred men to assist you,” shouted Crow Foot, standing in front of Sitting Bull and striving to push away the police who were guarding him. “You shall not go to the fort. Give the war-whoop now.”

While this commotion was going on his followers to the number of one hundred and fifty men had congregated about the house, and by the time he was dressed an excited crowd of Indians had surrounded the police and were pressing them to the wall. When Sitting Bull came out and saw how many men he had to depend on, and compared them with the small number of police, he determined that he had gone far enough.

“I will not go to the fort,” said he in a terrible rage. “You will shut me up there until I am as white as the snows on the top of the mountain. My children here will rescue me.”

That was all that was needed on the part of Sitting Bull to draw on a fight. While the majority of the police were trying to clear

the way, one of his men turned and shot Bull Head in the side.

"Now is the chance to see if your ghost shirts will do what you say they will!" shouted the lieutenant; and, though mortally wounded, shot Sitting Bull through the head. Almost before the smoke of the revolver had died away, Red Tomahawk, who guarded the prisoner behind, came to the relief of his chief, and Sitting Bull dropped dead in his tracks.

Then began a hand-to-hand fight of forty-three police against one hundred and fifty Indians. Catch-the-Bear, the man who fired the first shot and was the means of giving Bull Head his mortal wound, and Crow Foot, were killed; and after a hard fight the trained policemen drove their assailants into a piece of timber close by. Then they returned to the house, carried their dead and wounded into it, and held it for two hours, until the arrival of the troops. During the fight the Indian women attacked the police with knives and clubs; but in spite of the excitement the policemen simply disarmed them and put them in one of the houses under guard.

The fight lasted but a few minutes, but it was fatal to some of the contestants. Six of the policemen were killed or mortally wounded, and eight of the Indians, in spite of their ghost shirts, were sent to the happy hunting-grounds. The warmest praise was given to the policemen by those who knew all the circumstances, for some of those who faced death had near relatives opposed to them.

The war that had so long been predicted by the soldiers had now fairly commenced. Some of the Indians who were engaged in the effort to release Sitting Bull fled to the Bad Lands, but the majority at once made preparations to go to their agent and surrender. That was what the courier, who was at that moment speaking to the Indians, wanted them to do; but the most of them were for gathering up their tepees and joining those who had retreated to the Bad Lands, for if they once got among them the soldiers would find it a desperate task to whip them. Of course this raised a discussion which became fiercer as the talking progressed, until finally an Indian jumped into the midst of the disputants and

succeeded in commanding attention so that he could speak.

“You talk mighty big about going to the Bad Lands and fighting the whites,” said he, “but before you do that I want you to decide the fate of a prisoner who is now held by the camp. A white man was captured while passing through our lines six days ago, and I am one of the few who took him.”

The yells which broke out on every side were appalling. The braves crowded up around the speaker, shook their weapons in his face, and threatened him with all sorts of punishment. The idea of a prisoner being captured while they were not on the warpath was a little too much for the Indian to stand. He could not comprehend it. The speaker waited until their anger had somewhat subsided, and then went on :

“Those ghost shirts you are making so much fuss about will not help you one bit,” said he. “They are nothing but buckskin, and the white people’s bullets will go through them very easily. Now, I want all of you who are willing to go to the agent and sur-

render, to go with me ; and all of you who want to fight, go to the Bad Lands."

The squawman, who stood around listening, heard all that was said about his prisoner, and he was remarkably uneasy over it. If the Indians proved to be so angry at one of their number as to threaten his life, what would they do to him ? Those who wanted to surrender would probably take the prisoner along with them and give him up to the agent as a proof of their good will, while those who wanted to go to the Bad Lands and fight it out would no doubt kill him at once.

" And even if they don't include me in the killing I might as well be alone, for there are my partners who will go to jail," said the squawman, who looked all around to make sure that there was nobody watching him, and then started for his lodge. " It was a mighty fool trick of me, my capturing that fellow, and I am sorry I did it. I wish he was back at the fort, where he belongs."

Upon arriving at his lodge he lifted the door, but stopped very suddenly when he caught a view of the interior of it. His bed

was torn up, his weapons were gone, and an opening in the tepee directly opposite the door told the story of the escape. The women were nowhere to be seen.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN INTERVIEW IN THE WOODS.

THE squawman stood as if thunderstruck, but he understood the story as well as if it had been explained to him. The women had got tired of staying back there in suspense while their comrades were learning the full history of Sitting Bull's death, and, impelled by their curiosity, had gone to hear about it too, and Carl, the Trailer, had taken the only chance there had been given him to escape. That was all there was of it. But there were other questions that came to Harding while he reflected on these things. What would the Sioux do to him? There was one question which divided the Dacotas into two parties, and the thing must be settled then and there without a moment's delay. Some of them were going to start for the Bad Lands before the troops came to hem them in, and the others were equally determined to go to the

agent and surrender. He knew that the fighting members of the tribe would soon be up there to demand the prisoner at his hands, and that the rest would come along to protect him ; and both parties were so strong, and so bent on having things turn out in their favor, that it was possible there might be bloodshed before the matter was settled.

“I am in a fix,” thought the squawman, as these thoughts came flooding upon him, “and I don’t know what to do. The prisoner is gone, and that is all there is of it. I wish I had let him go in the first place.”

At this moment wild whoops and yells came from the dancing-ground, and as they seemed to approach nearer and grow louder as they came closer to his lodge, the squawman was aroused into action. He was not simple enough to join in with the fighting members of the tribe. He knew that they would be whipped sooner or later, and what was there to hinder him from going under the sod ? He was not quite ready to do that ; and after listening a moment to the howls of rage that came to his ears he dashed through his tepee,

passed out of the slit that Carl had made with his knife, and ascended to the top of the hill. On the way up he came to a decision.

“That boy ain’t gone toward the fort,” said the squawman to himself. “He is much too smart to be captured in that way. He went off in this direction, and when the Sioux get weary of looking for him he will come about and strike for the fort.”

Acting upon the thoughts that passed through his mind, the squawman turned away from the fort and followed a course that led him squarely on to the Trailer’s hiding-place. His ears told him pretty nearly what was going on in the camp. He knew, by the yells which broke out with redoubled force, when the Indians discovered the hole through the side of the tepee by which Carl had made his escape; and three or four of the young braves, who were anxious to get somebody’s scalp to wear to the Bad Lands, came along the base of the hill looking for Carl, but they turned toward the fort. The rest of the Indians stopped in his tepee, and after a chorus of loud yells from both parties they finally

ceased. Somebody was making them a speech.

“I hope they won’t come any farther,” said the squawman anxiously. “If they will only just listen to that friend’s advice and go away, Carl is all right.”

It takes an Indian forever to make up his mind whether to do a thing or not, and for a long time it was uncertain who would gain the mastery—the fighting members, who were anxious to kill Carl, or those who wanted to go to the agent and surrender. But at length the yells died away, those who were going to the Bad Lands having wasted time enough, and the others, who wanted to go to the agent, drawing away to their tepees, leaving the rest to do as they pleased in the matter. When the fighting members of the tribe saw their companions leaving them they became alarmed and left the squawman’s tepee in a body, and thus the dispute was brought to an end. Carl was given a fair opportunity for his escape, but he did not know it until afterward. The young braves who had gone along toward the fort had not yet returned.

The hill along which the young scout had taken his hurried flight was covered with a dense mass of willows, and the squawman had stopped in them as soon as he heard the commotion at his tepee. A short distance in front of him, but not in plain sight, was another figure, who stood with his gun at a ready and his finger on the trigger. It was Carl, the Trailer, who was determined that two or three of his pursuers should not get off scott free in case he was discovered. He saw the squawman when he came up, and, if Harding had only known it, his life hung by a thread. When the yells of the Indians had ceased, and all became quiet again, the squawman proceeded to carry out the resolution he had formed while making his way to the top of the hill.

“Carl!” said he, in a low and cautious whisper.

There was no answer returned. The figure of the scout was drawn a little higher, and the muzzle of his rifle covered the man’s breast.

“Carl!” repeated the squawman in louder and more anxious tones.

“Well, what do you want?” came the answer this time. “Throw your hands up. I can see very plainly, and if you make a loud noise you are booked for the other world.”

The hands of the squawman were at once raised above his head, and he tried in vain to make out the dim and shadowy form of the young scout among the bushes; but Carl was secure in his concealment.

“Have you got any cartridges about you?” was the next question.

“Nary one. Every one I had is in that weapon.”

“You see I took your rifle to help me along,” returned Carl. “How did you know where to find me so easily?”

“I knew you did not go toward the fort, and I knew, too, that you could not have gone far in these bushes,” replied the squawman. “I want to tell you that your way of escape is open to you.”

“You did not follow me on purpose to tell me that, did you? I knew it when the Indians quit yelling. Now, how does it come?”

“Some of the tribe are bound to get into

the Bad Lands to fight it out, and the others are going to the agent to surrender," said Harding. "One wanted to kill you and the rest did not want to; so, between them, you got off without much pursuit. You can go straight to the fort if you want to; but be careful of those men who are going to the Bad Lands. They are on the warpath now."

"Is that all you wanted to tell me?" asked Carl.

"No, it ain't," said the squawman. "Are you going to leave me without any weapons?"

"I don't see that I can do anything else. I would be mighty foolish to turn this gun into your own hands. I will take it to the fort, and you can come there and get it."

"Don't you know that it is impossible for me to do that?" said the squawman in alarm.

"If you take the rifle with you to the fort I am done for. The commanding officer will begin to ask me about those stages that were held up some time ago."

"That is so," said Carl thoughtfully. "You see you got yourself into a bad scrape by going with those fellows. Well, I will see what I

can do for you. You are sure you don't want any cattle from me, are you?"

"Nary one. I would not have asked you for them, but I was hard up. I wanted money, and didn't care how I got it."

"And there is another thing I want to tell you, Harding," said Carl. He saw the squawman's hands come down, but by that time he had lowered his rifle to the ground and drawn one of his revolvers, with which he covered the man's head. "Do you know that your partners have been sent to the Leavenworth jail by this time?"

"No!" exclaimed the squawman.

"Well, they have, and so you can see that it would be of no use for me to write that letter to General Miles."

"When did that happen?" asked Harding, who was astonished by this revelation.

"About two weeks ago. You see, the soldiers around here don't wait to see how things are coming out. The general was convinced of those fellows' guilt, and he sent them to jail without the least delay; so you are alone in being a squawman."

Harding was unstrung by this information.

"Dog-gone you, what made you agree to write that letter for?" said he; and the words came hissing out between his clenched teeth in a way that would have made Carl afraid of him had their circumstances been reversed.

"I don't know that I agreed to write it," said Carl. "If I did so, I did it simply to gain time toward effecting my escape. You would have agreed to it yourself if you had been in my place."

"If the general gets his grip on me——"

"Oh, he is bound to get you some time, be that sooner or later; and when he gets hold of you, you will have to go to Leavenworth jail too."

The squawman plainly saw how this thing could be brought about. If he went with those of the tribe who surrendered he would be hemmed in by soldiers, somebody would be sure to see and recognize him, and he would be put under arrest immediately. If he went with those who were already escaping to the Bad Lands he would, like them, be whipped in a few days, and there, too, the soldiers

would bother him. He was not such a bold man as some might suppose. He was ready enough to slip up on a man behind his back and bushwhack him, but when it came to meeting one in a fair fight—that was a little bit too much for the squawman. While he was thinking about it the young scout spoke again.

“I will do the best I can for you,” said he. “I will take the cartridges out of this gun and put it here in the bushes, where you can find it in five minutes after I go away. You can get some more cartridges of the Indians.”

“Say, Carl, you couldn’t say anything to get me out of this scrape, could you?”

“No, I could not,” said the scout, somewhat astonished at the proposition. “You held up the stage, and that is contrary to law, and some of you shot the driver. You will have to suffer for that.”

“I used to herd cattle for your father,” said the squawman at a venture.

“Suppose you did? What do you suppose the general cares for that? You were caught in the act of robbing him, too.”

"Well, I have had a lesson, and I will never do it again. I will lead an honest life from this time on."

"If you are talking that way simply to get me to say a word to General Miles you are making a big mistake," said Carl. "Nothing that I could say would benefit you. You have violated the law, and consequently you have got to suffer for it, I tell you. Now here is your gun, blanket and butcher-knife. I will put them at the roots of this tree, and in five minutes after I am gone you can come and get them. The cartridges I shall keep."

"But you will leave yourself without any weapon at all," said the squawman.

"Don't fool yourself. I have a revolver in each hand."

"Why, how did you get them?"

"I have had them all the time. Now good-by, Harding, and let me tell you one thing: you might as well come up and stand your punishment. You have every law-abiding citizen in the United States down on you, and wherever you go, you are not safe from arrest."

Silence reigned in the little thicket after

that. Harding listened with all his ears, but could not hear a leaf rustle or a twig snap as Carl moved away from the spot. He waited all of five minutes, and then moved up to take possession of his property. After a little search he found them all there, and with something that sounded like an oath he took them under his arm and made the best of his way back to his lodge.

“I’ve either got to go with them fellows to the Bad Lands, and get whipped when they do, or I must go and surrender myself,” he said to himself. “I know that little snipe could have said something for me if he had chosen to do it; but here I am, with everybody down on me. Blessed if I know what to do.”

“I think he has more cheek than any man I ever saw,” muttered Carl, as he moved cautiously away from his place of concealment. “He makes an attempt to rob father and gets a bullet in him for his pains, and then comes to me with the request that I will say something for him! Mighty clear of it. I would say something that would get him stretched up by the neck, if I could.”

CHAPTER XV.

FIVE YEARS BEFORE.

ABOUT forty miles distant from Fort Scott, in a quiet valley surrounded on all sides by stately hills, the ranch of Mr. Preston was located. The valley was fifty miles long and half as wide, and the owner had no difficulty in protecting his stock during the winter storms which now and then spread over the valley, accompanied by a driving snow that effectually shut the cowboys off from all contact with the outside world. A river flowed through within a hundred yards or so of the house, and on the wild fowl that frequented its banks during the fall and winter Carl Preston had received his first instruction in wing-shooting. Game of nearly all kinds was abundant, and it was no trouble at all for the ranchmen who wanted a haunch of vension to shoot a deer when they came to the river for water. It was a quiet, happy

home, and Carl never would have thought of leaving it had his father been spared to him.

The house was a rambling structure, built of rough boards, dismal-looking enough on the outside, but in the interior it was fitted up as any boy would care to have it. A porch ran the full length of the front of the house, and one day in the month of June Carl Preston sat on it, deeply interested in some work the foreman was doing upon his saddle. Carl was at that time seventeen years of age, and, to quote from the herdsmen, with whom he was an especial favorite, he was "as likely a boy as ever stood up." But there was one objection to Carl, and that was, he never would study his books. According to Colonel Dodge, he found more excitement in horses and guns than he did in anything else. He tried hard to master a lesson that his father gave him, but just as surely as anything happened outside, he would go out to see what the matter was. Did any of the cattle become alarmed and threaten a stampede, Carl wanted to be sure that the cowboy got ahead of them and kept them from going out at the entrance

of the valley onto the prairie; or, if a horseman was selected that morning at breakfast to break in a bronco, Carl would happen on the porch about the time he got ready to begin, and see that the horse did not do the cowboy any damage. At last his father became disheartened, put away the books, and began work on Carl's education himself. He took him into the field with him every time he went, all the while discoursing upon some subject in which he hoped Carl would be interested, and in this way the boy learned much that he could not have got out of books.

"So you think you won't be lonely any more after your cousin comes?" said the foreman, stopping to pound down a waxed end with his hammer. "Well, I hope you will like him, but I am afraid you won't."

Mr. Preston had left home three days before to go to Standing Rock Agency for the purpose of meeting this cousin, and he had purposely left Carl at home till he could see what manner of boy it was that he was going to meet.

This boy Claude was the only son of Mr.

Preston's brother, who lived in St. Louis. During his father's lifetime, for Claude was now an orphan, Mr. Preston often had calls for money and assistance, until he began to believe that really his brother did not amount to much. He got him situations, only to have the man throw them up at last. To his brother's inquiry as to why he had done so he always replied that it was something to which he was not adapted, and begged for something easier. Now the man was dead and Claude was left alone. He wrote to Mr. Preston, and, telling of the death of his father, asked him what he should do.

"Now is the time for him to make good his boasts that he is going to set me up in business," said Claude to himself. "Ten to one he will write me to go out there, and that is one thing that I don't want to do. But then he has money, and I will see what I can do with him after I get out there. I will promise him that if he will give me five thousand dollars I will never bother him again."

One thing that made Claude so free with his uncle's money was the conversations he

had often had with his father. He had heard that all Western men were reckless with their gains, and he thought perhaps Mr. Preston would be equally so. What were five thousand dollars to him? He could easily get it out of the first cattle he sold. But now his worst fears came to him. Mr. Preston, after holding a consultation with his foreman—educated man as he was, he needed somebody to go to—wrote to Claude, and sent him money to come to Standing Rock Agency. After he got there he would still have a hundred and sixty miles to ride, and, for fear that he might not be able to stand the journey on horseback, Mr. Preston would meet him there with a wagon. Claude did not like the prospect of going out there so far from everybody, but still he packed up his trunk and went, and he found his uncle ready to receive him. Carl, as we said, had been left at home, because his father was anxious to see what sort of a boy—or man, rather, for Claude was nearly seven years older than Carl—he had been so willing to receive into his house.

“I hope you will like him, but I am afraid

you won't," repeated the foreman. "A man who has lived all his life in a big city ain't a-going to be contented out here."

"Oh, I hope he will," said Carl, somewhat disappointed at the foreman's view of the matter. "I will give him up everything I've got if he will only stay here with me. There are plenty of horses for him to ride, there is a boat on the river, and——"

"That may all be," said the cowboy, "but when he is in the city he has more than that. Where are the theatres for him to go to, and the balls and sleigh-rides?"

"Why, Claude has not been to any of those things," said Carl in surprise. "You must remember that his father was poor."

"Supposing he was. What has this man been doing during all these years? If he had a position when his father died, what was the reason he did not keep it?"

"Blessed if I know," said Carl, who began to have a faint idea of the way the matter stood.

"I'll tell you just what's the matter with Claude," said the cowboy, getting upon his

feet. "He did not have a thing to do when his father was alive; he stayed at home or bummed around some place waiting for his father to give him money; and now, when his father's left him, he's afloat and does not know what to do. I tell you, he has come to a bad place. If he waits for your father to give him money he will wait for a long while."

"You are prejudiced, and I hope that you are mistaken. However, he will soon be here, and I want you to meet him as civilly as you can."

"Oh, I will do that," said the cowboy. "He is coming here as your guest, and of course I will take off my hat to him. But I will tell you one thing, and that ain't two," he added mentally, as he shouldered his saddle and walked toward the corral with it: "I believe that a fellow who will stand around with his hands in his pockets, while his father is so poor that he doesn't know where his next meal is coming from, is not a man who will do to run with you. I shall keep an eye on him."

This made it plain that Mr. Preston had

talked rather freely with his foreman before he started for Standing Rock Agency, and that the latter's suspicions had been aroused. The cowboy was loyal to the family, and anything that interfered with them was sure to raise his ire. Carl did not know what to think when he went away and left him sitting there on the porch. Ever since his father went away he had been impatient for his return, for he wanted to see his cousin, and had promised himself that he would try by every means in his power to make his stay under their roof agreeable.

"Thompson is mistaken—I know he is, or father would not have received him under our roof," muttered Carl, as he turned himself around on the porch and gazed toward the entrance of the valley. "At any rate, I shall not fall in with him until I see Claude and judge him for myself."

This much was settled, and Carl forthwith dismissed all thoughts of his cousin from his mind. His father had promised to be at home on the afternoon of that day, and then the matter could be determined to his satisfac-

tion. His pony came up and thrust his nose into his hand, and Carl suddenly thought of something.

"I believe I will not wait for them to get home," said he, going to the end of the porch where were hung the saddle and bridle which he used in riding. "I will go down to the gap and meet them."

The pony—he was always called the pony, and nothing else—did not raise any objection to being saddled and bridled. He was as gentle with Carl as a dog, although if anybody else came near him he was apt to be dangerous. This was the pony that Carl rode when he got his name. He came home on a leave of absence and told his father of it, and the consequence was Carl was not allowed to go back.

"I tell you those fellows have gone too far in naming my boy," said Mr. Preston in astonishment. "Have you ever been in that country before?"

"Not quite so far down," answered Carl, who almost wished that he had said nothing about it. "I have been down pretty near to

Fort Belknap with Mason, carrying dispatches, and that is as far as I have been."

"Do you know what those Indians would have done to you if they had captured you?"

"Yes, sir; but I didn't intend to be captured."

"Yes? Well, you don't go back to the fort any more; and if Mason comes up here I will tell him what I think of him."

Carl smiled as he put the saddle on his pony and the conversation he had had with his father came vividly to his mind; but, being an obedient boy, he had stayed at home after that, and listened to the stories the scouts told, although he had no hand in them himself. Some day he hoped to gain his father's consent to take part in them; but until that consent was gained he would remain there on the ranch, acting as cowboy.

Without taking any weapons with him Carl mounted his pony and set off at a gallop, followed by his pointers, which went with him everywhere. It was three miles to "the gap," as he called it, which gave access to the valley from the prairie, and he rode the entire dis-

tance without seeing anybody. The cattle were all up at the farthest end of the range, and had no business on that side of the house unless they were stampeded. As he drew rein, however, and cast his eyes down the road, he saw a dim object at the farther end which appeared to be coming toward him. A second look started him down the road again, and a brisk gallop of a mile or more showed him that it was his father's team.

"Now I will soon find out whether or not Thompson is mistaken," said Carl to himself. "There are two of them on the front seat, and one of them is a stranger. It must be Claude."

Filled with curiosity, Carl kept his pony on a lope until he obtained a nearer view of the man who was a stranger to him. The result satisfied him and his countenance fell. Claude was neatly dressed as far as his outward appearance went, and his gloved hands, which lay before him, were as dainty as a woman's; but there was something in his face that was not attractive. It had a hard look, a dissipated look such as Carl had never seen before, although he well knew what it meant.

"Halloo ! Carl," said his father, who was somewhat surprised at the boy's silence. "How is everything?"

"Father," exclaimed Carl, extending his hand to his sire, "I am glad to see you back again safe and sound. And this is my cousin," he added, riding around the wagon so that he could shake hands with Claude. "How do you do, sir? I suppose you thought you were never going to get here, didn't you?"

"Oh, no," said Claude with a smile. "I knew uncle would not run me off into the mountains and lose me."

While he spoke the young men had been making a mental estimate of each other. Carl judged something of his cousin by the grasp of his hand. He did not put any life into it; it was as limp as a piece of wet rope. Claude judged of Carl the same way, and both of them came pretty near the mark.

"Drat the boy, he has the grasp of a young blacksmith," said Claude, noticing the glove on his hand, which Carl had considerably mussed during his greeting. "And this is the kind of fellow I am to be associated

with all my life! I'll bet the boy doesn't know putty. I have seen enough of uncle's life. I am going to get away from here as soon as I can."

CHAPTER XVI.

WHAT CLAUDE KNEW.

“**Y**ES, sir, I am going to get away from here as soon as I can,” repeated Claude, giving his cousin a good looking over as he rode a little in advance of him. “I know just what I will have to do when I arrive at the shanty they call home. Uncle has not said so, but I infer he is going to make a cowboy out of me. If there is anything I do despise it is a horse; and I know this wild Indian will take great delight in giving me the wildest one there is on the range to ride. Then what will I do during my off times? Not a billiard-table nor a bowling-alley here! I wish I could think up some way to get around the old man.”

Claude was filled with such thoughts as these during his ride to the ranch, although he tried his level best to keep up his end of the conversation. He laughed when the others

did, when Carl told his father of the time that Thompson had had breaking in the sorrel mare—not because he could see any fun in it, but for the reason that he did not want to let his uncle and cousin see how completely his mind was taken up with other matters. Finally he aroused himself and began to take more interest in what they were saying. It would be well enough, he thought, to wait awhile before getting away from there.

“Carl, do you see anything of the Indians out here?” was his first question.

“Oh, yes; we see them every day,” replied Carl.

“But do you have any trouble with them? I have heard that Indians are always on the warpath, and that they shoot and scalp every white man they see.”

“Well, it is not so. We are on the Sioux reservation, and we know that they have been peaceable ever since their surrender.”

“What did they surrender for?”

“To pay for killing Custer and his band,” replied Carl, looking at his cousin with some surprise.

"I believe I heard something about that. Custer lost several of his own men, didn't he?"

"Well, I should say so. It was the greatest massacre that ever was known. Custer gave up his own life; and, besides, he lost two hundred and forty-six of his men."

"Do you find any game about here?" asked Claude, who plainly saw that it would not do to talk to Carl about the Indians.

"More than we want. If you are fond of shooting, I can take you where you can shoot a grizzly bear inside of three hours after you leave our house."

"They are dangerous, are they not?"

"Well, I guess you would think so after you have been in a battle with one. Last week we took a man down to the fort, to the hospital, who had his left shoulder all torn out."

"Have you got any books that are worth the reading?" said Claude, who very soon made up his mind that he didn't want anything to do with grizzly bears. "You must have lots of time at your disposal——"

"Well, no. We have our evenings if we are not on the watch, but then we are too tired to do anything but sit around and talk. We have plenty of books, however, and among them there is one that I always admired—Scott's 'Lady of the Lake.'"

"Yes, I believe I have heard of that book. Scott was a robber, was he not?"

"No," answered Carl indignantly. "He was a Scottish nobleman. But he made one of his heroes an outlaw, and he ran on until he met his lawful monarch and killed him."

Both the young men remained silent after that. Carl was astonished that his cousin, who was fresh from the city, where everybody is supposed to know everything, should be ignorant of little matters which he had at his tongue's end, and Claude saw that he must be careful what subjects he touched upon to avoid showing how little he knew. By this time they were in sight of the ranch. It is hard to tell just what kind of a looking building Claude had picked out in his imagination for his uncle to live in, but it was plain that his amazement increased when he looked at it.

He got down out of the wagon and was immediately introduced to Thompson, who gave him a hearty shake, and at the same time he bent his eyes upon him as if he meant to look him through.

"Everything is all right, sir," said he in response to an inquiry from his employer, "and Carl has had one good, hearty laugh since you went away. The old sorrel threw me three times in succession, and I thought Carl would never get over it. I think you will find everything just as it was."

Claude was shown into his room, which he had to himself; and Carl, after turning his pony loose, sat down upon the porch to think. To say that he was sadly disappointed in his cousin would not begin to express it. He knew that the man was older than himself, and that he would find it hard work to amuse him; but he did not suppose that there was going to be such a gulf between them.

Claude knew literally nothing outside of billiards and bowling-alleys, and he would have to go a long way from that valley to find them. His thoughts, as he sat on his bed

gazing idly at the rag carpet on the floor, were very much out of place for one who had just come among relatives he had not seen for a long time, and whom he had tired of already.

"I was a fool for ever coming out here, but then I did not know that they lived so far from everybody," said Claude, running his fingers through his hair and acting altogether as if he were very much displeased with himself. "I wish I were back in the Planters' House, playing a game of billiards with somebody; but now that I am here, I am going to make the most of it. I don't like my uncle's looks. He is a pretty hard man to deal with."

And we may add that these were his reflections during the two years that he remained an unwilling visitor at the ranch. He conquered himself as well as he could, and stayed there because he had nowhere else to go. If he went to the city he would have to go to work at something, and he thought that living on the ranch was better than going among entire strangers. He tried hard to learn his duties; and being given a sober old horse that

it was no trouble to ride, and keeping always in company with Carl, he found that he got along better than he otherwise thought he would. But there was one thing that came into Claude's mind that he would not have his relatives know for anything. Mr. Preston had an office which opened off the dining-room, and every pay-day, and that came once a month, he opened a safe in which Claude had often seen huge piles of greenbacks stowed away. He had not thought about this for some time after he gained an insight into the safe, but of late it had gradually come upon him that if he could get into that safe unbeknown to anybody, he would have enough to keep him in idleness as long as he lived. It scared him at first, but the longer he pondered upon it the more he thought it could be done. Besides, his uncle was gradually wasting away from some form of incurable disease, and Claude had schooled himself to look upon his death with the greatest composure. Of course Mr. Preston would not want the money after he was gone; and as to Carl, he would have the stock and ranch left, and that was all he

needed. If he could not make a living out of that, he deserved to starve.

"I think that is the only way to make money," said Claude to himself. "It is true I might try Carl after his father is gone, but I don't have any hopes of making him divide the property with me. He will want it all himself, for he is awful stingy. I'll keep an eye on that safe, and if he leaves the key in the door, as I have known him to do a hundred times, I'll just open it and take what I want. But where will I go after I have performed the deed? Well, that will require some study."

Every time Claude talked to himself in this way he grew more and more impatient for something to happen. One morning as he was about to mount his horse to go out and attend to the cattle he was approached by a couple of rather seedy-looking men, who inquired for Mr. Preston.

"He is out on the ranch now, but he will be in before long," said Claude. "Do you want to see him for anything particular?"

"Yes—we want a job at herding stock," said one of the men, who answered to the

name of Harding. "We understood that some of his stockmen had left him."

"They were three men who have got all the stock they want and have gone off somewhere to begin business for themselves. I don't know whether you could fill their places or not. You don't look like men who had been in the habit of herding stock."

And they didn't, either. One of them, as we have said, was Harding, and the other was Ainsworth, and they looked just what they were—regular squawmen. Claude had been long enough on the plains to tell a stockman when he saw him.

"Perhaps we don't," said Harding, "but we have been used to the business all our lives. Is old man Preston out this way? Then we will ride with you until we find him."

Claude rode on ahead, followed by the squawmen, and somehow he did not feel safe in their presence; but before long something that one of the men said opened his eyes and made him feel that his uncle, by hiring the two men in question, would make easy of accomplishment certain plans he had formed.

"You're getting rich herding cattle, ain't you?" said Harding. "Well, it beats the world how some men can get rich and do nothing. If I had what old man Preston is worth I wouldn't never do nothing no more."

"Neither would I," said Claude. "But it takes money to make money; haven't you lived long enough to prove that? A man who hires out to be abroad in all sorts of weather, and who loses his sleep of nights for the paltry sum of forty-five dollars a month, don't see much money by the time the year is up."

Here the subject was dropped, but enough had been said to set each one to thinking. Harding and his partner were hard up, to use the language of the country. The provisions their wives drew every week did not furnish them with money, and how in the world they were going to get funds was what troubled them. If the truth must be known, they came there to Mr. Preston's house not for the purpose of herding cattle, but with an eye on the safe in the office. Claude, dull as he was about some things, saw that, and instantly two courses of action suggested themselves to him :

should he scrape acquaintance with the men, in case his uncle hired them, and share the proceeds with them, or should he pretend to be on their side, find out what arrangements they made in regard to robbing the safe, and then go to his uncle and expose them ?

“By gracious! here is another chance to make money,” said Claude, so overcome with his grand idea that it was all he could do to keep from laughing outright. “If I go in with them they will take the money and leave me to whistle for my share; but if I go to my uncle and post him, he will certainly reward me for my efforts, and that will be better than stealing. I tell you I will get the start of that man yet.”

Claude was so impatient to reach his uncle and turn the men over to him that he put his horse into a lope, and in the space of half an hour discovered his relative riding slowly toward him. He simply said “Here are two men who want a chance to herd cattle,” and then passed on, so that he could have an opportunity to think over his new scheme without being bothered by anybody. It was in

his mind all that day, and when he went home to supper that night he found the men, with their hats off and their sleeves rolled up, in the act of taking a wash.

"I guess uncle has hired you," said he.

"Is old man—I mean is Mr. Preston your uncle?" asked one of the men in surprise.

"Oh, yes, he is my uncle easy enough, but he treats me mighty mean. In fact he uses all his hands mean."

Claude looked all around before he gave utterance to this falsehood, for if Thompson or some of the older hands on the ranch had heard him, it is possible that he would have listened to the truth, plainly told. A kinder owner to work for than Mr. Preston did not exist, and every one who had earned his daily bread on that ranch knew it. If the three men who had left the ranch to begin business for themselves could have heard it, they would have told a different story. These men had been at work for Mr. Preston a long time, and each one carried, besides his stock, one thousand dollars, with which to start him on the road to prosperity.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PLAN DISCUSSED.

“**T**HERE!” said Claude, as he lifted his face from the towel and gazed after the two men who were walking into the dining-room. “I have given them something to chew on. I don’t know whether they believe that Uncle Preston is guilty of meanness or not—I rather think, from the expression of their faces, that they do not; but it will show them what *I* think, and perhaps it will amount to something.”

Thompson, the foreman, was the one who objected to Mr. Preston hiring the men, and he showed it so plainly that it is a wonder the men did not see it. During the week following he would hardly pay any attention to them except to give them their orders, and he got through with that as soon as possible. At the end of that time he found opportunity to speak to Mr. Preston privately.

"So you have hired those two men, have you?" said he.

"I have, and I didn't think I could do any better," said his employer.

"I should not raise a bit of fault with them if they were stock-herders," said Thompson, "but I know they are not. When you go down to the fort make inquiries about them, and you will find that they have Indian wives. These men are making forty-five dollars a month, and their wives are getting their provisions for nothing."

"Oh, I guess you are mistaken. These men must have had some object in coming here."

"Yes, they have. Where do you keep the key to your safe?"

"In my pocket, of course."

"Then it is all right. The cook will be here while you are around the house, and it will be dangerous for anybody to try to get it. You will be around with me or with Carl _____"

"And Claude, too," interrupted Mr. Preston.

“Well, the least said about Claude the better,” said Thompson.

“Why, you don’t suspect Claude of having designs on that safe, do you?” said Mr. Preston in surprise.

“I don’t suspect anything; but you just take my advice and keep your eyes on that safe. You’ve got most too much money in there.”

“I declare this beats me! Things have come to a pretty pass when a man cannot keep in his possession what money he needs.”

“I am only just telling you what I believe,” said Thompson. “I have had an eye on that man Claude for a long time. When you pay off the hands he is the last one in your office, and I expect he takes particular notice of where you put the key.”

“Thompson,” said Mr. Preston, suddenly putting his hand into his pocket, “do me the favor to keep this key. I am not as strong as I used to be——”

“I know you are not,” said the foreman sadly. “Time was when you would have gloried to have somebody come here with the

intention of walking off with the contents of that safe, but it ain't so now. I will take the key, and if anybody gets it, it will be when I am laid out."

Thompson rode off to attend to his duties, feeling much better than he did when he began his conversation with his employer. He was hale and strong, a dead shot, as utterly devoid of fear as it is possible for a man to be, and it would be a dangerous piece of business for one to attempt to put his hand onto that key while it was in his possession.

"I feel all right now," said Thompson, who drew a long breath of relief. "I have been worrying about that key ever since Claude has been here, but now I would like to see him get it. Many a time, before Claude came here, I have seen Mr. Preston go off and leave the key to that safe sticking in the lock for weeks at a time, and nobody ever thought of going near it. He has been a little cautious about that ever since I spoke to him concerning it. I'll take the cook into my confidence. He is a sure shot, keeps his revolvers hung up where he can put his hands on them at an in-

stant's warning, and with him watching in the house and me watching outside we have the dead wood on them."

The conversation had a very different effect upon Mr. Preston. He became suspicious of everybody. He watched his men and Claude continually; and, though they were always respectful in their manner toward him, he felt that there was something behind it all. One reason was because Claude had not yet talked with the men. He was waiting for them to "show their hands," and that came about right speedily. When the fall round-up came, and the young cattle had to be branded, it chanced that Claude and the two men were together during the best part of the day. As long as Thompson was with them they went about their work in earnest; but when the foreman went away, Harding, who seemed to have been waiting for this opportunity, entered upon the subject at once. He must have known just how the matter was coming out, or he would have been a little more cautious about it.

"You say your uncle treats all his hands

mean," said he, addressing himself to Claude. "I think he treats us all right."

"No doubt he does you," replied Claude, "but he is only waiting for an opportunity to turn loose on you. If we should let these steers get away from us and start toward the entrance of the valley, then you would see what kind of a man uncle is."

"Well, I don't know as I blame him any for that," said Harding. "There are lots of cattle on the prairie for them to mingle with."

"You ought to be in my place once," said Claude. "You would get a blessing every night for not doing your work up right. I tell you, I am getting sick of it."

"Why don't you quit him?"

"Because I haven't any other place to go. Forty-five dollars a month is better than nothing."

"You say he has lots of money in that safe?" continued Harding, coming down to the point at once.

"Oceans of it."

"Do you know where he keeps the key?"

"I do. He has it in his pocket; but then

he takes his clothes off every night and throws them over a chair."

"Do you suppose you could work your way in there at night and get it? You would have to be careful and not wake him up."

"Oh, yes, I could do it. Uncle sleeps like a log."

Harding went off at a lope to catch a steer that objected to being rounded up, and when he came back Claude waited for him to say something more; but the cowboy seemed to have had his talk out. After waiting until his patience was exhausted, Claude broke in with—

"Now, I want to know what you mean by inquiring in regard to uncle's safe? It's there in the office, and there is nobody going to rob it, either."

"How much money do you think he has in the safe?" asked Harding. "It wouldn't pay to break into it and get nothing out."

"He has eighteen hundred dollars in there that I know of," said Claude. "I remember that when he sold those hundred head to the

paymaster at the fort I passed through the hall and saw a big wad of greenbacks on the table. He got twenty dollars apiece for the cattle, and that would clear him two thousand dollars; but he has since paid out about two hundred of it."

"That's a power of money," said Harding, his eyes sparkling when he thought of handling that amount. "That would be—how much apiece?"

"For three of us? That would make six hundred dollars."

"Now, can you keep still if I tell you something?" asked Harding suddenly.

"Of course I can. I can keep a secret."

"Well, Ainsworth and me have come here with the intention of seeing the contents of that safe before we go away."

"I know it."

"You do?" exclaimed Harding, looking at him suspiciously. "Who told you of it?"

"Nobody. I just knew it from the way you acted."

"Do you suppose anyone else suspects it?"

"Not that I know of. You have kept still

when other people were around, and I don't think anybody mistrusts you."

"We will give you one-third of what we get if you will go in with us and get the key."

"I am in for it ; but the question is, what shall we do to keep the money after we get it? The whole country will be after us."

"And it will take more than the whole country to catch us, too," said Harding with a grin. "We'll go off among the Sioux Indians."

If Claude had had any intention of joining the squawmen in any attempt on the safe, this proposition of Harding's would almost have taken his breath away. He had seen some of the Indians during the two years he had been there, and the idea of taking up his abode with them was not to be thought of for a moment. They were so filthy that he could not bear to go near them ; but he had another motive in view. All he wanted now was to get at Harding's plans, and then he would go straight to his uncle with them. He was sure that in that way he would get a reward for saving him from being robbed.

"Well, what do you say?" asked Harding.

"Will you feel perfectly safe from capture while you live with the Sioux?" asked Claude.

"Oh, yes. The Indians always have spies among the white folks, and they would keep us posted. They can't catch us there."

"Well, I will go. When do you think you will make the attempt?"

"To-morrow night, if my partner agrees to it. I am getting sick of this cattle business. I long to be back in my tepee, where I can lay down and smoke as long as I please. I'll speak to my partner at noon, and I'll tell you what he says. Here comes that Thompson. I'd like to get him out on the prairie where I could get a fair squint at him with my rifle. I would teach him to lay around and watch his betters."

"Here, boys!" shouted the foreman as he galloped up; "you don't drive these cattle fast enough. It will be dark before we get them down to the corral. You Claude! take after that fellow and bring him back."

Claude put his horse into a gallop and "took after" the unwilling steer who objected

to going toward the corral ; but he was grateful to Thompson for sending him away, for he wanted to have time to compose his features. His chance for making money had come at last. Of course there was a chance for him to arouse the suspicion of the squawmen, who would take speedy revenge upon him, and that was one thing against which he must guard himself. He would not be seen any more in his uncle's company than he had been heretofore, and when Carl came toward him for the purpose of helping him he had business on the flank of the drove, at some little distance away.

“ I know I am all right now,” said Claude to himself, “ and the main thing must be to keep myself all right. If I am seen around in your company, and the squawmen shall slip up on their plan of robbing the safe, I will be the first to suffer for it. I'll wait until night, and then I'll fix things as they ought to be.”

But it seemed to him that night was a long way off. The cattle were driven toward the corral, the calves separated from them and

put in the inclosure, and amid the confusion and noise that attended all this Ainsworth found time to give Claude an encouraging wink.

"What do you mean by that?" whispered Claude.

"It is all right," was the reply. "We will see you to-morrow night and tell you what to do."

"Look here," said Claude, looking all around to make sure that no one was watching him, "I am not to do anything but get the key, am I?"

"No—that will be enough for us."

"And I am to get my third of the money as soon as we get it?"

"Sure. You don't think we would try to take it away from you?"

"Well, I don't know. You cowboys are mighty reckless in handling money, and you might tell me to look farther before you would give me a cent."

"As sure as you live and breathe we have no such an idea," said Ainsworth, opening his eyes in surprise. "You get the key for us and we will give you the money."

“That is a little too far-fetched,” thought Claude, as the last calf was driven inside the corral. “You were almost too ready to promise me that money. It must be pretty near night now, and I am just aching to tell my uncle of the plans that have been laid against him. How much will he give me? Five thousand dollars at least. If he gives me less than that I shall be sorry I told him.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

“THEY'RE IN THE OFFICE!”

IT was long after dark before the cowboys went to supper, but they had performed a good day's work, and felt jolly over it. Claude was the liveliest one of the party. He conducted himself in such a way that his uncle looked at him with surprise, and he more than once caught the angry glances of the two squawmen fastened upon him with amazement. But Claude didn't mind that. Within two hours he would see his uncle and post him in regard to the robbery, and that was all he cared for.

“You can look at me as angry as you have a mind to,” he kept saying to himself. “I will get a big sum of money for this evening's work, and then I can go back to the city and live as I please. Five thousand dollars! One can see a heap of pleasure with that.”

Supper over, Claude went out to take care of his horse (we mean by that that he turned

him loose with the other horses, to feed during the night), and as he turned back to the house who should come up but Harding and his partner.

"Say," said the former, looking all around to satisfy himself that nobody else was within hearing, "what made you act so during supper-time? Do you want everybody about the ranch to know what we are going to do?"

"No, but I felt so gay that I couldn't hold in," replied Claude. "I don't care what they think. I shall soon have some money, and I can go back to the city with that. I think, as you do, that I am getting sick of this cattle business."

"You are sure you can get that key?" asked Harding.

"I can try. If he keeps it in his trousers pocket I can get it."

"That's all we want you to do. Now remember and hold yourself in a bit. I am afraid of that Thompson. We will have to keep an eye out for him."

"Are you going to shoot him?" asked Claude in some alarm.

"Not if he behaves himself we won't; but he does not want to come fooling around while we are in the office. We may not have a chance to speak to you to-morrow, and we want you to bear this in mind: as soon as it comes dark, and everybody on the ranch is asleep, you come out on the porch, and you will find us there."

"I've got to saddle my horse, haven't I?"

"Yes, you can do that after you find us. We will be out somewhere near the porch, and you can slip in and get the key. That's all. Now, remember it, and you will know just what you have got to do."

"Yes, I will remember it," muttered Claude, as the squawmen walked away. "I must go and get my horse after the ranch has been aroused. That's a pretty idea! Now I must go and find uncle."

When Claude reached the porch, he found Carl sitting there in company with his father. Of course they were talking about the incidents that had transpired during the round-up—how this steer had got frightened and made a bee-line for the prairie, and how that one

had charged upon Thompson, who narrowly escaped being unhorsed—and they were having a hearty laugh over them. It was not Claude's intention to say anything to his uncle while Carl was about. He sat down in a chair and waited impatiently for him to go.

"Well, Claude, you seemed to enjoy this round-up a great deal better than you did the one of last year," said his uncle. "You must have met with some amusing scenes out there, judging by the way you conducted yourself at the table."

"I did not see anything to laugh at," replied Claude, "but I am more used to riding on horseback than I was a year ago, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. None of the cattle charged upon me, and so I got off safe."

In spite of Claude's impatience, it was nearly ten o'clock before his cousin thought it high time he was going to bed. They had a hard day's work to perform on the morrow, and they needed some sleep to prepare for it. He bade his cousin good-night and went into the house; and no sooner had he done so than Claude made a motion enjoining silence upon

his uncle, and went first to one end of the porch, and then to the other, to make sure that there was no one listening to hear what he had to say. His uncle looked on with surprise, and when Claude seated himself he said :

“A person would think that you have some secret to tell me. Why don’t you want somebody to hear it?”

“Well, I guess you will think it *is* a secret by the time I tell it,” whispered Claude. “Uncle, there are two men here who have made up their minds to rob you to-morrow night.”

Claude thought that if that revelation had been made to him he would have gone wild over it. Instead of that, his uncle settled back in his chair and looked at him without speaking.

“They are Harding and his partner,” continued Claude. “They say that the reason they came here was to get a look at your safe.”

“How did you find it out?” asked Mr. Preston. He did not seem to be nervous at

all. He talked in his usual tone of voice, and in much the same manner that he would have discussed the round-up that was to come off the next day.

"I don't know why they came to me about it, unless it was because I know where you keep the key," replied Claude. "I agreed with them until I found out what they were going to do, and then I came to you with it."

"Where do they think they will find the key?"

"I am to get the key, and I am to feel in your trousers pocket for it. They are no cattlemen, in the first place; and after they rob you they are going among the Sioux Indians, where they will be safe."

"It is just as I expected," said his uncle; "they are two squawmen beyond a doubt. You were to do nothing but get the key?"

"No, sir. They thought that was enough. I am not to be mixed up in the matter until it is all over."

"Well, you go ahead, and when you come into my room I will come out to them. Good-night."

This was all that was said. Claude sat there in his chair and saw his uncle go into the house, and he felt his guiltiness. Mr. Preston did not say a word about rewarding him, and acted altogether as though he did not consider the matter of much moment.

“Does he intend to leave me out in the cold, I wonder?” soliloquized Claude. “If so, I am sorry I did not stay in with the squawmen. He is suspicious; I can see that plain enough. I wish the thing was over, and that the men were safe among the Sioux Indians.”

Mr. Preston had not passed a sleepless night. He got up bright and early, wished everybody good-morning, and one would not have supposed that he had listened to an astounding revelation the night before. He gave his orders in much the same way at the breakfast-table, and when he had seen the herdsmen go away he filled his pipe and sat on the porch to enjoy it. But there were two men about the house who, according to Claude's way of thinking, acted as though they wanted to pitch into the squawmen then

and there, and end the matter. They were Thompson and the cook. The former glared savagely at them as he took his seat on the opposite side of the table, and the cook hung around the door of the dining-room, and that was a thing he had never done before, and waited for them to say or do something. Claude was in a fever of suspense. He saw it all plain enough, even if the squawmen did not.

"Say, Claude, you have been saying something to the old man," said Harding, as the three moved off in a body to carry out Mr. Preston's commands. "If you have, you may bet your bottom dollar that you won't see any of his money."

As the squawman spoke he laid his hand upon his revolver and scowled at Claude in a way that made him tremble. He knew what his fate would be if he did anything to confirm the man's suspicions.

"What would I say to the old man?" he asked in a faint voice. "I am as deep in the mud as you are."

"What made the foreman and cook look so cross at us?" asked Harding in reply.

"I don't know. He has just as much right to be mad at me as he has to feel mad at you."

"We will go on with our programme just as we have planned it," said Harding desperately. "If the thing works all right, well and good; if it don't, it will be all wrong for somebody. Mind that."

The day drew on and night came on apace, and still Claude had no chance to speak to the two squawmen. He had been given his lesson the night before, and he concluded that that was going to do. Now that the time drew near he was beset with fears to which he had hitherto been a stranger. Claude knew by the way Harding handled his revolver that he was going to shoot rather than allow his plans to fall through, and, although he had never heard of his uncle doing such a thing, he thought that he, too, would have recourse to firearms. And where would *he* be about the time the shooting began?

"I am really afraid I have got myself in a scrape," thought Claude, so overcome with dread that it was all he could do to sit still on his horse. "I never dreamed of their shoot-

ing, but that is the way all Western men have of getting out of a difficulty. I wish I had stayed in St. Louis when I was there. They don't have any shooting going on in that place."

Supper being over, Claude did not go out to attend his horse as usual. He whispered to one of the men to attend to it for him, and during the evening sat on the porch with his uncle and cousin. He sat there until ten o'clock, and then Carl said good-night and went to his room. His uncle sat still longer, but finally arose and followed Carl, at the same time laying his hand upon Claude's arm.

"Is it all right?" said he.

"It is all right so far as I know," said Claude. "I had a talk with them this morning, and they said they would go on with their regular plans. Be careful of yourself, uncle. They are going to shoot."

"I will look out for myself. You keep out of the way."

• His uncle went to his room and Claude sat there on the porch, literally benumbed with fear. Finally he mustered up courage enough

to go into his room and lie down on the bed without removing his clothes. He lay there until twelve o'clock, and then, everything being still, he got up and sat on the bed.

"I wonder if those two men are as nervous as I am?" said Claude to himself. "I don't intend to do anything myself, but I feel as guilty as though I had been caught in the act. Well, here goes."

Claude got up and made his way to the front door, and when he had opened it very cautiously he saw Harding standing at the other end of the porch. The man straightened up, mounted the steps, and stood beside him.

"I thought you never was coming," said he, and he fairly hissed out the words. "You see, if you had not come there would have been some murder done in this house."

"Oh, I hope you will not try that," said Claude.

"Then let the old man behave himself and do just as he is told. Now take us to the office, and then go and get the key."

Claude pressed his hand against his heart to still its beatings and turned back into the

house. A few steps brought them to the door of the office. It was light in there, for the moon was shining out of doors, and the first thing Harding did was to step across the room and raise one of the windows, so that he and his companion could have a chance for escape. Then he motioned for Claude to go ahead; but now another thought occurred to him. Suppose Harding, instead of trusting him to go alone into the room, should send his partner with him? That would be a misfortune indeed, for he did not see how he was to convey to his uncle the information that the two squawmen were in his office. He dared not hesitate, but turned and went to his uncle's room, and to his great delight he went alone. The men did not hear him as he walked along the hall, and when he approached the door of his uncle's room, which always stood open, he discovered a figure on the bed, and he saw it rise up as he stepped across the threshold.

"Claude!" said his uncle.

"It is I," replied Claude in a trembling voice. "They're in the office!"

Mr. Preston immediately arose, and in his hand, which he pulled out from under his pillow, was a revolver. It looked now as though his uncle was going to shoot, too.

CHAPTER XIX.

A TALK WITH HIS UNCLE.

“**B**E very careful of yourself,” said Claude in an earnest whisper. “They have their revolvers in their hands, and are ready to shoot the first one who steps into the office.”

“I will take care of that,” said Mr. Preston. “You keep out of the way.”

Claude stood in the door of his uncle’s room and watched him as he moved with noiseless steps toward the office. He reached the door and went into it, and the next moment he heard the word “Surrender!” spoken in a loud tone, followed by the report of a pistol. A yell came close upon the heels of it, and after that the noise of the revolvers came faster than he could count them. He felt sure that his uncle had received his death-wound. Almost at the same instant, as if they had been waiting for this signal, there was the sound of hurrying feet in the hall, and the

foreman and cook ran by with their revolvers in readiness. They glanced in at the office door, and then went on to the front door, which they opened in great haste, and began shooting there; but presently the sound of flying hoofs came to Claude's ears, which told him that the squawmen had succeeded in reaching their horses and were scurrying away toward the entrance of the valley. A moment afterward his uncle came out of the office. His face was very pale, but Claude could see that he was not wounded.

"They have got away," said the foreman in disgust. "Did they hit you anywhere, Mr. Preston?"

"No, I am all right," said his employer. "But bring a light and we will see if there isn't some marks down here. Harding drew his pistol on me, but I got the first shot and he dropped the revolver out of his hand. When he yelled so, I thought surely I had him."

Of course the whole house was aroused by this time. Every man who was asleep under that roof was awakened by the pistol-shots,



THE ROBBERS FOILED.



and had come out, revolver in hand, to see what was going on. Foremost among them was Carl, who, when he heard the particulars of the matter, ran to the front door and gazed out into the night.

"It is no use, Carl," said his father. "They had their horses ready saddled, and of course took themselves straight off. I am not hurt, and that is one thing you ought to be thankful for."

"Here's Harding's weapon," said Carl, as the cook came in at that moment with a light. "It is all blood, too. Why, father, I don't see how you missed them at that distance."

"Probably my nerves had something to do with it," replied his father. "A year ago I would have risked my chance of dropping them both where they stood; but my skill has gone from me."

"Here's some more blood on the window-sill," said one of the cowboys. "You have probably marked them both."

"Yes, I hit each one of them. Now we will go back and go to bed. Claude, I owe you something for this. If they had taken

what there is in the safe it would not have ruined me. A few days ago I had five thousand dollars in there, but now it is safe in the paymaster's hands at the fort. How much do I owe you, Claude?"

"Nothing at all, sir," said Claude, as he shook hands with Carl, who came up but did not say anything. "I have saved your money, and that is all I cared for."

Some little time was spent by the hands in talking over the incidents of the attempted robbery, and everybody except the foreman and cook were loud in their praises of Claude, who had led the squawmen on till he got all their plans. They were suspicious of Claude, and it would require something more than he had done to relieve them of it.

"Father, I have some fault to find with you," said Carl, as they were about to separate and each one go to his own room. "Why did you not take some one into your confidence?"

"I did. These two men were wide-awake and came out as soon as they heard the pistol-shots. I could not have found anybody better than they, could I?"

“No ; but you ought to have had somebody along to back up your shots. I believe I could have done better than you did.”

This raised a smile on the part of all of them, and they bade Mr. Preston good-night and went to their rooms. Claude was the only one who did not feel very good over it. His uncle had said that he “owed him something,” but he did not say how much.

“Why didn’t he promise me the money to-morrow, so that I can go back to the city?” said Claude, as he took off his clothes and tumbled into bed. “They must see that I don’t want to live here. I wonder if I could punch him up and get him to draw on that five thousand dollars he has in the paymaster’s hands? That is something worth thinking of.”

Morning came at length, and Claude got up to find that he was treated with respect by all hands except the foreman and cook. These two did not seem to want anything to do with him. Of course they bid him good-morning and answered all the questions he asked them, but they did it in a short way, as though his talking bothered them. They were careful

not to let Mr. Preston see them in conversation with him, for they knew that their employer would take them to task about it. None of the hands referred to the matter at the breakfast-table, and in fact they seemed to have forgotten all about it, and Claude listened in vain for his uncle to mention the subject of a reward. He finally concluded that he was not going to get any.

"He is the meanest man I ever saw," said Claude, as he went out to saddle his horse. "He lets me risk my life in saving his money, and doesn't give me anything. I wish to goodness I had said nothing about it."

A few days after this, Claude found a couple of strange men in the house when he came home to dinner. They were very different from Harding and his partner, for they were cattlemen on the face of them. They wore their revolvers strapped about their waists, had silk handkerchiefs around their necks, and their hats, which lay beside them on the floor, were sombreros of the widest kind.

"Well, Claude, it seems that you are not out of this scrape after all," said Mr. Preston.

"What scrape do you mean, uncle?" asked Claude.

"Why, about that safe robbery. Harding and his partner have gone among the Sioux Indians, and are going to kill every one of us."

"How did you find that out?" asked Claude, his face growing a shade paler.

"These men, who have come down to hire in their places, brought the news straight from them. They are going to kill you on sight, for they blame you as much as anybody for their failure; and Carl they are going to capture and keep until they can get some stock out of him."

"They say you talked to them very mean in regard to Mr. Preston," said one of the cowboys with a smile.

"I never said a word to them in my life," said Claude, opening his eyes in surprise. "They said something to me, and I tried my best to defend Uncle Preston. They got their money right along every month, and were not worked any harder than the rest of us. But how are they going to catch us?"

"Oh, there are plenty of ways in which it

can be done," said Mr. Preston. "They are among the Sioux now, and it will be easy work to get a few of the young braves to come here and steal some cattle."

"Why, they are at peace!" said Claude.

"That makes no difference. The Sioux are getting mighty uneasy about their money and their supplies, which ought to have been delivered long ago; and when a man gets hungry it don't take him long to get on a cattle-stealing expedition. They will leave you here, wherever they find you, but they will capture Carl."

Mr. Preston laughed when he said this, and Claude was half inclined to believe that he did not put any faith in what the squawmen intended to do. Carl came in very shortly, and he, too, laughed over the story. He did not believe that the Sioux would go on the warpath for the sake of capturing him, and he said so.

"I'll tell you what to do, Claude," said he. "If you see an Indian coming toward you, just halt him."

"How will I do that? He speaks his own language——"

“Yes ; but you have a rifle. Just point that toward him, and you will see him turn and go the other way.”

There was one thing that made Claude determine that he would not stay in that country any longer than he could help, and that was the idea of killing him on sight. Another thing that made him angry was the cordial manner in which the foreman and cook, who were not long in finding out why they came there, greeted the newcomers. Thompson told them that they were the very men he needed. Claude waited some time for the men to mount their horses and go away, and then he approached his uncle, who was sitting on the porch enjoying his after-dinner pipe.

“Why, Claude, how does this come?” asked Mr. Preston. “You ought to have been away long ago.”

“Yes, but I wanted to see you first,” said Claude. “I am getting sick of staying in this country——”

“Ah ! You don’t like the idea of the Sioux being down on you,” said his uncle with a laugh.

"I don't care anything about that. I have been discontented here for a long time, and I am impatient to get back to the city. Give me some money and let me go."

"We are very busy just now, Claude, and I don't know whether I can find anybody to show you the way to Standing Rock Agency or not. If you can wait two or three weeks I will send somebody with you."

Claude waited for him to say something about a reward for breaking up that safe robbery, but Mr. Preston did not say anything about it. It was right on the end of Claude's tongue to ask him if he was going to give him anything for that, but on the whole he concluded that he would hold his peace.

"How much money have I got coming to me?" he asked. "I know I have not got much," he added mentally, "but that will start me on the road."

"I owe you four hundred dollars," said his uncle. "You know you spent money pretty lively while you were down at the fort. That sum can't help you much if you are in a big city. Your expensive habits will

get the better of you. What do you intend to do?"

"I don't know. I know, or did know, of a news depot that I could buy for eight hundred dollars, and that would support me as well as anything. But the trouble is, I haven't got the eight hundred dollars."

"No, it takes money to make money, as I have often heard you express it. You could probably get that news depot for your four hundred dollars down, and if you were economical——"

"No, I could not. The man must have cash, for he intends to leave the country."

"That is bad, and you will have to hit upon something else. Have you ever tried book-keeping?"

"No, sir. That is altogether too confining a business for me. I want to have something to do so that I can get out of doors once in a while. A person would die for the want of exercise."

"Well, I don't know what you will go at," said his uncle, looking down at the floor. "Book-keeping is a very nice business, and if

you are careful to save your money it will last you until you take a full course at some commercial college."

"I shall not try book-keeping, and that is out of the question."

"Didn't your father prepare you for any business in life?"

"No, sir. He had always got through his life without being educated for any business, and he thought that I could do the same."

"Your father made a bad mistake—I will say that much for him."

"Have you educated Carl for any business?" asked Claude, who kept growing angrier the longer the conversation continued.

"Yes; he will be able to attend to the stock business after I am gone. I had hoped to prepare you for the same business, but I see you don't like it. If you will wait two or three weeks I will send some one down to show you the way to the fort," said Mr. Preston, getting upon his feet.

This was a hint that his uncle had said all he wanted to say on the subject, and Claude at once started out after his horse.

CHAPTER XX.

A NEW PLAN.

CLAUDE was so angry when he left his chair and started out to get his horse that it was all he could do to keep from yelling. He had had a short talk with his uncle, and it amounted to nothing. The story about finding a news depot which he could have for eight hundred dollars was made up out of his own head. All he wanted was to get the money in his hands, and then he could live as he pleased.

“I see it is all up with me,” said Claude, as he mounted his horse and set out for the range. “He does not intend to give me anything. I have risked my life for him all these years—I would like to know if I did not risk my life that time the cow charged upon me when I pulled her out of the mud—and have kept his safe from being robbed; and all he means to do is to fit me for a cowman! But I guess I won’t say anything about going

home just now. Uncle Preston can't last forever, the remedies he is using don't help his cough one particle, and who knows but I may get Carl to divide the business with me? I tell you that is worth thinking of."

The days passed on, and when two weeks had gone by the young cattle had all been branded and the cowboys had a little more leisure on their hands. At the end of that time his uncle called him into the office and had his money all laid out for him.

"Now, Claude, if you are resolved to go, I can send somebody to show you the way to the fort," said he.

"Well, uncle, I have had plenty of opportunity to think the matter over, and have come to the conclusion that I will not go home yet awhile," replied Claude. "This is the best business I can think of, and with your permission I will follow it a little while longer. Four hundred dollars, as you say, would not help me to go into anything by which I could support myself in the city."

"Oh, yes, we will keep you, and be glad to," his uncle hastened to answer. "And if

you keep on, Carl will give you a thousand dollars to enable you to start right."

"That is better than nothing," soliloquized Claude. "I hope you will rest easy after giving me that small pittance out of your unbounded wealth." Then aloud he said: "You say that Carl will give me that amount. What is the reason *you* can't give it?"

"Because I don't expect to last very long," said Mr. Preston. "In six months from now I expect to be under the sod."

"Oh, uncle, don't talk that way," exclaimed Claude, who for once in his life felt really alarmed for his relative.

"There is no use in denying it. I feel that I am growing weaker every day. Well, I guess that is all I have to say to you. If you are going to stay with me, I will put this back in the safe."

Claude was always angry after holding these talks with his uncle. He went out of the door respectfully enough, and, making sure that there was no one in the hall to observe his movements, he turned and shook his fist at it, at the same time muttering something under

his breath which sounded very much like an oath.

During the days that followed it was seen by everybody that Mr. Preston was gradually giving up to the dread disease, consumption, which had so long threatened him. His cough got so bad that he was finally obliged to give up riding entirely, and remained on his porch while his men were out herding cattle. When Carl saw this he gave up all hope and stayed behind with him; but affection could not curb the fell destroyer. At last Mr. Preston took to his bed, from which he never got up. The men came on tiptoe to his room to inquire after him, and even Claude felt awed in the presence of death. That is, he tried to appear so before the men; but when he got on his horse, away from everybody, he could scarcely restrain himself.

"He must have made a will," said Claude. "No person ever died with such an amount of property on hand without doing so. Who knows but that he has left me something? I will not wait for that thousand dollars. Carl can keep it and welcome—that is, if he thinks

he cannot get along without it. I'll take what is coming to me and go to the city, provided I cannot get around Carl and get him to divide the business with me. That is my only hope now."

At last it was all over. When Claude came in from the range one day something told him that "the meanest man he ever saw" was out of his way for all time to come. Carl had shut himself up in his room, but Claude soon found his way into the death-chamber, where he stayed just one minute, and then came out. The three herdsmen who had gone off to engage in business on their own responsibility were there, and also several officers from the fort; for Mr. Preston was popular, and his friends believed in showing him all the respect in their power.

Two days passed, and then all that was mortal of Mr. Preston was laid away in a grave which he had selected for his eternal abiding-place. Then the mourners returned to the house to witness the reading of the will. The doctor took charge of the matter, and, beginning with the foreman, he read all through

until he came to Carl, to whom he bequeathed all his property left over after the legacies had been provided for. To each man he left one thousand dollars, and Claude's name had not been mentioned at all. That young gentleman was surprised and thunderstruck; and all this while the doctor had been folding down the will to get at a short cordicil there was at the bottom of it. He read it when he came to it, and even in death he found that his uncle was still giving him advice. He bequeathed to Claude the sum of one thousand dollars, and wound up with the hope that Claude would save his money, and that it would be the means of leading him to prosperity and success. The amount was so much smaller than Claude thought it was going to be, that for a moment or two he hardly seemed to breathe; but he finally came to himself, and taking up his hat, which lay beside him on the floor, he walked out of the house. He held in pretty well until he was behind the stables, out of sight, and then gave full vent to his feelings.

"A thousand dollars!" said he, and this time he did not try to interrupt the oaths that

came out thick and fast. "And I saved his safe from being robbed, too. I must try Carl now, although he is so awful stingy I don't think I can make anything out of him. If I once get a drove of cattle to sell I will skip out with the first money I get."

For a long time Claude did not go into the house. He felt enraged at his uncle, and he knew it showed itself in his face; but after a while he managed to go in in time for supper. The officers at the fort had gone away, and there was no one left except the three men who had gone off herding cattle for themselves. When he got there he found that something of moment was being discussed.

"I don't know how I shall act," said Thompson, looking down at his plate. "I never have been in the city in my life."

"You can do just as I do," answered Carl. "I never have been in the city but a few times in my life, and I shall stay there no longer than I can help. There are some men in St. Louis who ought to be in jail, and if they found out that we had that amount of money with us they would try to steal it. You will

go with us, won't you?" he added, turning to his cousin, who at that moment came in. "Father has given by his will ten thousand dollars that I have not got, and I shall have to go to St. Louis after it. Thompson don't want to go."

Claude did not say anything immediately, for the words brought a new plan into his head. If he was going to St. Louis after more money, what was the reason he could not get that money for himself? He knew some pretty rough characters in St. Louis, more's the pity, and it would be no trouble at all to induce them to waylay Carl in some manner and get that money from him. But there was Thompson, who didn't want to go. He would go armed, of course—he could not go anywhere without his revolvers were strapped around him—and he would be in the way. If he could only think of some method to induce his cousin to leave Thompson behind. Seeing that Carl's eyes were fastened on him with an inquiring look, Claude answered the question.

"Of course I will go with you, for St. Louis is the place I want to see," said he. "If Thompson would rather stay here——"

"But he isn't going to stay here," Carl hastened to reply, "I have given my orders, which are for him to be ready to start for the city to-morrow. He will be ready, of course. I will pay you your thousand dollars after we get there."

This put a stop to further conversation on the subject, for everybody saw that Carl had made up his mind and that all argument was useless. When supper was ended Claude went out on the porch and sat down with his cousin.

"If I was in your place I would leave Thompson at home," said he. "He will be out of place there among all those nice people, and he won't be of any use to you, either."

"I will risk that," said Carl. "I want somebody along who is not afraid to shoot if I get into trouble, and Thompson is the only one I know of."

His cousin was firmly set upon this point, and Claude did not think it best to pursue the subject any further. He now came to the matter that was uppermost in his mind.

"Did Uncle Preston say anything to you

about dividing this business with me?" he asked suddenly.

"Not a word," said Carl in astonishment.

"Well, he said something to me about it, and I supposed you had got your instructions from him."

"He never said a thing about it. He left the whole business in my charge. He told me, however, that if you stayed here until you are able to herd cattle for yourself I was to give you a thousand dollars to help you along."

"I confess that that is a surprise to me," said Claude, as if he were almost overwhelmed with astonishment. "I supposed that he was going to provide for me during my lifetime."

Carl was really amazed to hear this. Of one thing he was sure: If his father had said anything to him about taking Claude into partnership with him, he would have done it, although he would have rebelled against it. But Claude did not know anything about herding cattle. He would have felt as safe by taking some tenderfoot out of an office in a city, who had never seen cattle on a stampede, and giving him a half interest in his business.

“I had but a little over four hundred dollars coming to me, and he said that amount was not enough to set me going till I could support myself,” said Claude, leaning his elbows on his knees and gazing thoughtfully at the floor. “I don’t know what I shall do now.”

“*I* don’t know, I am sure. I shall carry out the terms of his will, and more than that I cannot do.”

“You are willing to leave me to starve, I suppose?” said Claude, allowing his rage to get the better of him.

“If fifteen hundred dollars won’t keep you till you can find something to do, you ought to starve.”

During all the months that Claude had been with his cousin, living under the same roof with him, and seeing him in no end of scrapes with wild horses and wilder cattle, he had never seen him exhibit so much spirit before. He started up in his chair and looked at Claude as if waiting for him to say something else. Claude returned his gaze, and then picked up his hat and walked away ; but

the moment he got behind the stables he straightened up and shook both his fists in the direction of the porch.

"I didn't know that boy had so much pluck," said Claude. "No matter which way I turn, I am to be left out in the cold. Never mind. I've seen worse men than Thompson got away with, and we'll see whether or not he gets away with all the money."

"The idea of my dividing this business with him," said Carl in disgust. "Father never said a word about it. I would feel a great deal safer if I had Thompson. But I don't intend to stay around here after I get back from St. Louis. I don't want to be here, where everything will remind me of father. I shall go down to the fort and hire out to the commandant for a scout. I know the country as well as anybody, and I will not get lost."

Carl's first care was to get himself ready for the journey that was to come off on the morrow. He had been in the city but a few times with his father, and he thought he was pretty well acquainted with the banker who had charge of his father's money; but in order to make

assurance doubly sure there was a letter in his sire's will addressed to the gentleman in question, and he was sure that it would gain him the identification necessary for him to get the funds. This letter he put carefully away in the inside pocket of the moleskin suit which he laid out in readiness for the trip. Thompson came in after he had set the men to work and seated himself on Carl's bed.

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were obliged to take a wagon with them, and that would delay them just four days.

“At any rate I shall see the last of you,” soliloquized Carl, as he passed along the hall and saw Claude at work with his trunk. “I wish you had never come here. I know Thompson will be glad that you are gone.”

It must not be supposed that Carl really disliked his cousin, for he did not; but at the same time candor compelled him to say that affairs about the ranch did not move as smoothly as they did before he came there. He seemed to possess the faculty of getting the cowboys into a turmoil. Every little thing that was said out on the range went straight to his father's ears, until Mr. Preston told him that his cowboys satisfied him, and he didn't want to have any more stories brought to him. Thompson was the one who had the most fault to find with him. If he started him off to find certain cattle that had strayed off the range, he would perhaps find him, in an hour or two, miles away from his post, stretched out beneath the shade of a tree and taking matters easy. At such a time Thompson always gave him

the full benefit of his tongue, and it seemed to be hung in the middle, so that he could keep both ends of it clattering at once.

"There is one thing that I forgot to speak to you about," said Carl, going into Thompson's room. "Do you suppose that father ever said a word about my taking Claude into partnership with me?"

Thompson looked at Carl, and then backed toward the nearest chair and dropped into it.

"Claude told me of that this morning," continued Carl. "He says he don't know what he shall do to support himself if I let him go home."

"How much money has he got coming to him?" asked Thompson.

"Counting in the thousand, he has fifteen hundred dollars. At any rate, that is what I shall pay him."

"He can certainly get something to do before that is gone. If he can't, he ought to go hungry."

"That is what I told him. Do you suppose father said a word to him about going into partnership with me?"

"No," said Thompson emphatically. "I will tell you what is a fact, Carl. I love the ranch, I love every horse and cow on it, but if you take that man into business with you, you can get another foreman."

"You need not worry yourself. I have no intention of doing it."

The next morning the cowboys were all up at four o'clock to see the journey begun. If good wishes could have anything to do with them, they would certainly get back in as fine order as they were when they started. Claude's trunk had been thrown into the wagon without much regard to consequences, much to that young gentleman's disgust, and in ten minutes more the ranch was out of sight. They stopped that night at the fort, and if we were to say that everybody was glad to see Carl we should be touching the matter very lightly. Everybody had something to say about the loss of his father, and the kind words brought tears to Carl's eyes. He got away from the officers and went to see the commandant of the fort. He wanted to get a position for himself as bad as Claude did.

The colonel just listened to him until he found out what he had come there for, and then got up and shook him by the hand.

“Of course I have got a position for you,” said he. “You want to hurry back from St. Louis and get here as soon as possible. I will have business for you every day.”

Thompson was not at all pleased to hear this. Of course he would be given charge of the ranch during his employer's absence, but that did not suit him. He wanted Carl around so that he could take orders from him, and the place would be lonely without him. Claude, too, looked glum when he heard of it.

“You seem to find something to do without going out of your own country,” said he with evident disgust, “and I have got to go to St. Louis, and probably will not find anything there to suit me.”

Carl did not know what reply to make to this, so he said nothing. The next day they started on again, and in four days arrived at Standing Rock Agency. They made arrangements with the teamsters to keep their mules until they came back, and then Carl found

the quartermaster, of whom they obtained a permit to go down to Fort Scully on his boat. It was a small boat, built to run when the water in the river was shallow, and the time they had in getting down to their journey's end filled Carl with impatience. There seemed to be a bar in every bend, and the boat was kept busy "sparring off" to enable her to continue on her way; but at length Fort Scully was sighted and the boat made her landing.

"I don't expect we will be here when you come back," said the captain, to whom Carl had gone for some information on the subject. "We shall probably be up at Standing Rock Agency; but if we are not here, you can wait."

This was bad news for Carl, who wanted to get through with the trip and get back to his ranch without loss of time. He found another boat that was going to St. Louis, and on her he took passage, and after a pleasant journey—there was not as much "sparring off" to do on this boat as there was on the quartermaster's—they reached their destination. Thompson now had some fault to find with the men, and women, too, whom he met on this journey. A

good many of them gazed in surprise at his long hair, his wide sombrero and the clothing he wore, and he came to Carl and complained about it.

"I told you just how it would be," said he. "The folks all think I don't belong here."

"Do just as I do; pay no attention to them," said Carl. "You have only got to stand it for a little while. We will soon be on our way back again."

One morning when Carl awoke and raised himself on his elbow he found that the boat was tied up to the levee. He arose and went to the door, and could see nothing but boats on either side of him. Thompson slept in the bunk above him, and it was the work of but a few minutes to arouse him. Claude, we ought to say, did not approve of this arrangement at all. He thought he ought to occupy the same state-room with his cousin, but he was put into a room with an entire stranger. He first muttered gloomy threats over it, and then tried to think up the men he would get to assist him in waylaying Carl and getting his ten thousand dollars out of him.

“You think you are bothering me by paying so much attention to that miserable foreman,” said he. “Wait till we get to the city and you are given charge of that money. If Thompson is not afraid to shoot, I will get somebody who isn’t afraid either.”

“Thompson, wake up!” said Carl, when he had satisfied himself that he was at his journey’s end. “This boat got here and we never knew it. Now, we will stay on board and get our breakfast, and in the meantime I will see the captain and find out at what hour this boat will start up the river again. When nine o’clock comes we’ll go up to the bank.”

“Here you are,” exclaimed Claude, as they opened the door and stepped into the cabin. “You come with me, and I will take you where you can get a breakfast that will do you good. I am tired of living on these steamboats.”

“Where is the captain?” asked Carl. “Have you seen him?”

“He is around here somewhere. What do you want to see him for?”

“We want to find out when this boat is going to start again.”

"Are you going back so soon?" inquired Claude. "Why, you haven't seen any fun at all. You want to go to the theatre——"

"We did not come out to see fun on this trip," said Carl. "We came out on business; and when that is done we are going back."

"Well, that is no way to do," said Claude, somewhat alarmed. He wanted to see two of his boon companions by the time that Carl thought of going back, and if he was going to start up the river that night or to-morrow morning, he would be pressed for time. "You showed me all there was to be seen about your ranch, and you must let me do the same. I am acquainted here in St. Louis——"

"There's the captain now," interrupted Carl. "Come on, Thompson. Let us go and see him."

Claude was angry, as he always was whenever he had anything important to say to his cousin, and stood there and watched them while they hurried forward to interview the captain. Carl made known his wants in a few words, and the skipper said:

"We shall start out to-morrow night, if we

can get loaded. Is there any boat that will start before this one? I don't know, but you can look around and see. If you don't find any, come aboard of us."

Claude loafed about just long enough to hear the captain say this, and then turned and walked out on the guards.

"If I only had my money in my pockets I would go and hunt up those men the first thing I do," said he. "It is 'Thompson, do this,' or 'Thompson, do that,' and 'Claude, you can go to smash,' until I have grown sick and tired of hearing it. I bet you that I will get the start of them yet."

It was a long time before breakfast was ready, and Claude remained alone on the guards, as Carl and Thompson were perfectly willing he should do. They were sitting on the forward part of the boiler deck engaged in conversation, and when the breakfast-bell rang they went into the cabin. Only once during the meal hour did Carl address his cousin, and then it was to the effect that they would go up town as soon as the bank opened, and he would be glad to have his cousin go with him.

“Mr. Morphy will give you your own money with his own hands, and then you will know that you have got it right,” said he in conclusion. “He will give you fifteen hundred dollars.”

“And that is three thousand less than I deserve,” said Claude to himself. “If anybody would lay their plans to rob your safe I would not tell you of it.”

After breakfast there came two hours of loafing around with nothing to do, and Carl grew very weary over it. Thompson was looking for somebody to make fun of his clothes, and every time some one passed him and turned to take a second look the foreman would gaze angrily at them and slip his hand into the inside pocket of his coat. Carl saw it, and it was all he could do to keep from laughing in Thompson’s face; but at length the hands on his watch told him that the hour had come, and he jumped up, uttering the order he had so long been used to—

“Catch up!”

CHAPTER XXII.

A SURPRISE.

WHEN they got ashore they found themselves surrounded by the sights and sounds of the city, and they were so taken up with them that they could not say much to each other. Thompson kept close at Carl's side all the way, for he was afraid that if he became separated from him he would get lost among the drays and pedestrians. Carl knew right where he was going, and in process of time reached the bank. He entered as though he had a perfect right there, and once on the inside he found himself confronted by a long line of men who had come there on business—brokers' clerks who had come there to get their boxes, and others to get their checks cashed—and, standing his friends up against a desk, fell into the rear and patiently waited until his turn came. Then he handed out the letter he had found in his father's will and inquired if Mr. Morphy was anywhere about.

“Yes, sir,” said the cashier. “He is in his private office.”

“Will you be kind enough to send that letter in to him?” said Carl; and then he left the line and took his stand beside his companions. “When he comes out and asks me in I want you to go with me,” he said to them in a low tone.

Carl saw the clerk who had the letter in his possession vanish through a rear door, and while he was thinking about it Mr. Morphy came out. He glanced hastily at the men, and then advanced and took Carl by the hand.

“I am glad to see you, Mr. Preston,” said he, with a touch of sadness in his tones. “I am sorry that your father is not here with you. Come into the office.”

“I shall have to ask these men to go also,” said Carl.

“Certainly. Bring them right along.”

When he got into the office he put out chairs for them, but every thing was so neat and elegant that Thompson did not want to sit down; but he kept a close watch of Carl,

and seeing that the latter promptly seated himself, he finally followed his example.

"I have not read your father's letter yet," said the president, "and if you will excuse me I will do it now. I have only read that he is dead, but I can hardly realize it. Did he die suddenly?"

"It was sudden enough when it came, but I suppose he lingered along as all men do who are suffering from that disease," answered Carl. "It seems he thought that the letter would tell who I was."

"Oh, I would have known you anyway. If I see a man's face once, I can always remember him."

The president then went on reading the letter, and when he got through he was ready for business.

"I suppose you want some money," he said briskly. "Make out a check for what you want and you can have it."

Carl took the paper and the pen that were passed over to him and speedily made out his check for ten thousand dollars. The president looked at it to make sure that it was all

right, and went into the room where the cashier was. When he came out he had a big roll of bills in his hands.

"I suppose you want to pay the terms of the will with this, and so I have got it in small bills," said he.

"That is all right," said Carl. "Thank you, I don't want to go over it. I wish you would count out fifteen hundred dollars and give it to my cousin here, Claude Preston. He comes in for one share."

The president complied, and when Claude had taken the money (he never said "Thank you!" for it, either) Carl turned to Thompson.

"I want you to make room about your clothes to stow this money in," said he. "Then I shall feel safe."

Thompson, without saying a word, got upon his feet, and thrusting his hands one after the other into the inside pockets of his coat, brought out two big navy revolvers, which he laid upon the desk. Mr. Morphy looked on with surprise and remarked that Carl intended to have his money defended, at any rate.

"Yes; the people here in St. Louis are all

strangers to me, and I shall feel a good deal safer when I get back to my ranch," said Carl, rising to his feet. "One does not know when he is safe."

"That is a fact," said Mr. Morphy; "and let me tell you one thing right here: Don't make any friends at all. If a man comes to you and appears cordial and inquires after your health, go away from him and let him entirely alone. He is friendly to your money, but he is not at all friendly to you."

"I'll bear that in mind," said Carl, for he was not very well posted in regard to all the tricks that sharpers make use of to trap innocent victims. "We thank you for your kindness."

Mr. Morphy bowed, accompanied them to the front door, and saw them start toward their boat. Claude said nothing at all, for he was almost overwhelmed by the sight of the eight thousand dollars that Thompson had in his bosom. He saw that his shirt stuck out until a person would think he was wonderfully developed about the chest. He imagined how he would feel if that money was his own.

"I wish I had some place to carry these revolvers," said the foreman anxiously. "I have got to carry them in my hip pockets, and every one who comes up behind me can see them."

"That shows that you are ready to defend what you have in your shirt," said Carl with a laugh. "But that is all in your favor. There is a law against carrying concealed weapons, but yours are not concealed. Every one who looks at you knows that you have them."

At this moment, as if to show that Carl was right in his surmises, a policeman came along, and after taking a look at Thompson, turned and gave him another look as he passed. He saw the butts of the navy revolvers sticking out of his pockets, and then smiled at Carl and passed on as if he thought it was all right.

"There, Thompson, that cop saw your pistols and never said a word to you," said he.

"What cop?" asked Thompson in surprise.

"Why, that policeman. Your revolvers are not concealed, and so he took no notice of it."

"Then I am all right," said the foreman, immensely relieved. "I supposed that he would arrest me for having those weapons about me. Oh, yes, I am all right."

"Well, boys, here is your boat, and I presume you will go aboard of her," said Claude, as they arrived upon the levee. "I believe I will take leave of you right here."

"What are you going to do with that money you have in your pocket?" asked Carl. "You ought to put it in the bank, where it will be safe."

"I will attend to that the first thing I do. I will bet you that nobody will get it out of me. Good-by."

Thompson drew a long breath of relief, while Carl held out his hand to his cousin. He did not say that he was sorry to have him go away where he might never see him again, because he wasn't. He hoped that, Claude having got away from the ranch, things would go on as smoothly as they had done before he came there. But Claude, although he shook his cousin's hand heartily, was not yet done with him by any means. He had his eye on

that wad of money that Thompson carried in his shirt, and he did not intend to see the last of Carl until he had the handling of some of it.

“If you are going away before I have time to show you some of the sights of the city, I don’t know but I might as well bid you good-by now as some other time,” said Claude, drawing his left hand hastily across his eyes. “You have been mighty good to me since I have been out there on the ranch with you——”

“Oh, that is all right,” said Carl, who did not care to listen to any words which he knew Claude did not mean. “We treated you as we would anybody else who came there, and no better. Good-by, and good luck to you.”

When Claude had taken leave of his cousin he turned to say a word to Thompson, but that fellow had put his hands behind him. He was not going to take leave of him as Carl had done. Claude saw in a moment that he could not say anything to the foreman, so he turned on his heel and walked away.

“I am surprised at you,” said Carl, when Claude had passed on out of hearing. “Were you not sorry to see him go?”

"No, I was not," said Thompson emphatically. "I have been in constant hot water ever since he has been on the ranch. I told you at the start that I did not think you would like Claude, and I hit it, did I not?"

"You put your hands behind you because you did not want to bid me good-by, did you?" said Claude, turning about in his walk to grit his teeth at the foreman. "Well, I will bet you that before night you cannot shake hands with anybody. I will get a couple of men after you who will leave you in the river."

Carl did not intend to go on board his old vessel until he had been the length of the levee and had satisfied himself that there was no boat getting ready to sail before she did. It was not necessary that he should go on every one he saw to make inquiries. Some of them had their destinations printed on canvas and hung up on their hurricane-deck railings—for example, "For Vicksburg," "For Cairo," and for "New Orleans"—but he had yet to see one that was to sail up the river.

"I guess we had better go aboard our old

boat and take our chances," said Carl, after he had grown weary of examining the steamers. "Those officers are like old friends to us, and somehow I feel safer in their presence than I would anywhere else."

"That is what I say," answered Thompson. "If I was back at the ranch I tell you you would have to get somebody else to come with you."

Carl laughed and led the way aboard their own boat, where they secured a couple of chairs and sat down to wait until the steamer was ready to sail. They had already left their luggage (each one of them had a valise) in the hands of the porter, and when they saw the clerk go into his office Carl thought he would pay his passage and get a better room than they had in coming down. Thompson kept close at his side wherever he went. The presence of so large an amount of money made him terribly uneasy, and he did not want to let Carl out of his sight.

"You are going back with us," said the clerk, after Carl had told him the object of his visit. "We will go up to-morrow, and

she will be the first one out. We are to take on some army rations for those fellows at Fort Scully, and it won't be any trouble at all for you to wait three or four days until that little boat comes down. Five dollars, please."

"But you see we don't want to wait," said Carl, pulling out his ten dollars. "We are impatient to get back to our ranch as soon as possible."

"I thought you were ranchmen the first time I saw you," said the clerk. "You have lively times out there with the bears and mountain lions and all the other things. Do you live far from the river?"

"Well, it is a good piece. You see we are not used to the ways of the city, and when we get out there we are at home."

Their passage was soon paid, their valises secured from the porter and placed in their new room, and the two went back to their chairs on the boiler deck. When the bell rang for dinner they went in, and scarcely had they seated themselves in their chairs again when they discovered two men coming up the stairs. They were both well dressed and were

evidently going somewhere on business, for they had valises in their hands. They looked all around as if searching for somebody, and then one of them ventured to address Carl.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but can you tell me when this boat sails?" said he, politely.

Remembering what Mr. Morphy had said to him in regard to making friends with strangers, Carl did not act as he usually did when he was approached by persons with whom he was not acquainted. He looked up and simply said.

"You will find the clerk in his office."

"So he is," said the man. "So he is. Come on, Bob, and we'll soon see how much it is going to cost us to go up to Fort Scully."

"There are a couple of men that we want to keep out of the way of," said Carl, gazing after the passengers as they walked into the cabin. "They are going up our way, but we will not make friends with them, or with anybody else."

"Why, I took that man for a gentleman," said Thompson. "He begged your pardon before he spoke to you."

"That may be; but some of the biggest rascals there are a-going can be gentlemen when they please."

Thompson believed the boy to be mistaken, although he tried to be governed by him in all his movements. He saw the men pay their fare, and then one walked off toward the farther end of the cabin, while the other came out and took a chair on the boiler deck. He cast a quick searching glance at both of them (Thompson thought he knew what he had in his bosom to make his shirt stick out that way), and then drew back and placed his feet on the railing.

"Thank goodness I have my fare paid to my journey's end," said the man. "Have you been up the river lately?"

"Only a few days ago," said Carl shortly.

"Is there much water up there?"

"Not much."

"The reason I am so anxious in inquiring is that I have wasted a week in my trip up here, and am impatient to get to Fort Scully to see about some property I have there. Are you acquainted in Fort Scully?"

“I don’t know that I am,” replied Carl, and then he arose to his feet and went into the cabin, closing the door after him; but he was not in time to shut out Thompson, who stuck close to him. The cabin was entirely deserted, and the two men were in no danger of being overheard.

“Did you notice what that man said about his property?” asked Carl. “If I had inquired into it, I should have found that he had a check on some bank to a large amount, and he would want to borrow some money on it. I declare that man is coming in. Let us go to our own room.”

If the man was going to follow them up, he opened the cabin just in time to see the door of their state-room close behind them; but when they got there, Carl, who was leading the way, suddenly stopped. They had taken particular notice of the way they left their valises when they brought them there. They had put them under the lower bunk, out of the way; but here they were in the middle of the room, and the contents of each were scattered all over the floor. In addition to

this, the outside door, which opened onto the guards, was closed but not fastened. In two jumps Carl reached the door, pulled it open, and looked up and down the guards; but there was no one in sight.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CLAUDE VISITS THE POOL-ROOM.

“YOU treated me just as you treat everybody else who came to your ranch, and no better,” said Claude, hurrying down the street, away from his cousin. “You couldn’t treat me any better than you could anybody else just because I was a relation of yours, could you?” Well, you gave me one piece of advice that I will remember. I will put this money in bank, so that the fellows can’t draw on me for it.”

Claude was so mad when he took leave of his cousin that he tore along the street, paying no attention to anybody, bumping against the pedestrians he chanced to meet, and then hurried on without apologizing and presently reached the bank where his father had kept a small amount deposited during his lifetime. Here he left fourteen hundred dollars of his money, and with the balance tucked safely

away in his vest pocket he came out and took his way toward a pool-room which he had often been in the habit of visiting. He had been away from St. Louis a long time, and he was not certain that he could find anyone there with whom he was acquainted. The length of time he had been away, gaining health and strength by his outdoor exercise, had doubtless scattered the old frequenters of the place far and wide, and he would not know where to go to look for them.

“It all depends upon finding two men here who will just ache to handle that—I believe I’ll put it twenty thousand while I am about it,” said Claude, as he turned and made his way up stairs to the pool-room. “Ten thousand might not tempt them to run any risk, so I guess I will just double it. The first thing I do must be to keep myself out of Carl’s way. I will show the fellows where the boat lies, and they must do the rest.”

Claude threw open a door as he spoke, and there was the pool-room in full blast. There were four tables in the room, and each of them was surrounded by men and boys who

were eagerly watching the game. No one noticed him when he went in. There was a new bar-keeper behind the counter, and a hasty glance at the men about the tables satisfied him that the ones he wanted to see were not there, or, if they were, the hours they had passed at the pool-room had changed them materially.

“Is Tony Waller here yet?” said he, addressing the bar-keeper.

“Well, I guess not,” said the man, with a laugh. “Tony’s gone up.”

“Is he dead?” asked Claude.

“No, he aint; but he might as well be. Tony couldn’t make money by playing for it honest, and so he had to go to work and hold up one of our customers. He got five years for it.”

“Well, is Bud Kelly here?” said Claude, who was surprised to hear this about Tony.

“Do you see that man over there on the last table—he is just going to shoot,” said the barkeeper. “That’s Kelly.”

“My goodness! How he has changed,” exclaimed Claude, hardly willing to believe

his eyes. "He used to be a fancy duck, and now he looks as though he didn't have enough to eat."

"I haven't seen you around here of late," said the man.

"No; I have just come from the West. Kelly used to have a nice position in an insurance office."

"He lost that, and he has lost every position he has had since then. He makes his living out of pool."

"Well, I believe I must go and see him," said Claude to himself, as he walked toward the last table where Kelly was playing. "So Tony has gone up. I wonder if I have not got something else under way that will send Kelly up, too, if he is caught at it? He will have to run that risk."

Claude caught Kelly's eyes fastened upon him as he walked up to a chair and seated himself where he could watch the game, but no sign of recognition came forth. Claude was wondering if he had changed, too, but he could not have altered his appearance so much as the other man. His clothes were neat and

whole, and that was more than could be said of Kelly. Every once in a while the player looked toward him, and when the game was finished he put up his cue and came and took a chair beside Claude.

"Look here," he said with an attempt at familiarity, "I think I have seen you once before."

"Don't you know me, after all the long months I have spent out West?" said Claude.

"Claude Preston!" exclaimed Kelly. "I knew I had seen you, but I could not place you."

The two shook hands as though they were overjoyed to meet each other once more, and then Kelly settled down and pulled Claude's face over toward him.

"How did the old man pan out?" said he in a lower tone. "Did you make anything out of him?"

"No," said Claude in disgust. "He was the meanest man I ever saw; but he has paid for it all. He is dead."

"But he left you something in his will?" said Kelly.

"No, he didn't; not a thing. But I know where there are twenty thousand dollars that one could have for himself if he only had a little pluck. You used to be pretty good at such things; have you turned over a new leaf?"

"Waller has gone up for trying that very thing," said Kelly, as if his heart was not in the matter.

"But there is no such danger in this," answered Claude. "Now wait until I tell you how I have left things."

With this introduction, Claude went on and told Kelly everything that had happened to him while coming down with his cousin—how they went to the bank and drew out twenty thousand dollars which Thompson stowed away in his shirt, and that they were going back on the *Talisman*, the same boat that had brought them down from Fort Scully.

"I don't believe Thompson will keep the money around him all the while," said Claude in conclusion. "When they get back to their boat they are going to put it in their valise.

If they do that, you can easily get it. Twenty thousand dollars! That will be a little over six thousand dollars apiece, and you can go to California on that."

"How will I know them if I see them?" asked Kelly. The tone in which he spoke the words made Claude more than half inclined to believe that Kelly had a mind to try it.

"They are dressed in regular Western style—long hair, broad sombreros, and boots as fine as money can buy. They will be aboard the boat now, and this is the time to capture them."

Some more talk followed this conversation, and Kelly got up and went out. Claude waited an hour for him to come back, and all the while he was harassed by the fear that the man Kelly had gone after might not see it as plainly as he did.

"There is not a thing to do but to wait until after dark, and then pitch in and grab the money," said Claude to himself. "They can throw Carl overboard to keep him from using his revolvers, and I know that both of them can manage Thompson. I do hope that man

will agree to it. It is the best chance in the world they will ever have to make money."

By the time Claude had got through communicating with himself in this way the door opened and Kelly came in, followed by a man who was evidently hard up and had been for some time, judging by the looks of his clothes. This man was introduced as Sam Hayward; and, in accordance with his request, Claude was obliged to begin his story all over again. One thing that surprised Claude was the fact that the man took a deep interest in it, and seemed determined to get at it as soon as possible. He listened to Claude all through, and when he ceased he said:

"I say we can do it, Bud."

"There is nothing in the world to hinder it, if you only go at it with a determination to succeed," said Claude. "But there is one thing you must bear in mind: Don't let that Thompson put his hands behind him. He is a little quicker than a flash of lightning, and he will shoot before you know it."

"We will look out for that," said Hayward. "If he shoots, it shall not cost him anything."

There was another thing that Claude wanted to get at, and that was some better clothes than those two men had on. They must go aboard the steamer as though they were going up to Fort Scully, and they must have a valise or two, to take the appearance of travellers. Kelly must have known what he was thinking about, for he looked them over from top to bottom, and he hastened to remark :

“ If you say we can do it, why we will go and try it on. We will go home and get on some other clothes, and then you must go with us to show us where the Talisman lies. But see here, Claude—haven’t you got a little money with you ? We’re strapped, and that’s a fact. If we are going as travellers, of course we have got to pay our fare, and where is the money coming from to do it ? ”

Claude had been expecting this, and he was not in any hurry to advance the men money, but he did not see how he could get out of it. He was afraid he might never see it again ; but if they got the eight thousand dollars——

“ I have got just a hundred dollars in money that I saved from my work at herding

cattle," said he. "Will ten dollars apiece do you."

"You had better give us twenty while you are about it," said Kelly, as Claude drew his money out of his vest pocket. "If we get the twenty thousand dollars——"

"You must get it," said Claude earnestly. "In fact, don't undertake to steal that money unless you *can* get it. And then you want to watch out for the police. When will you attempt it?"

"To-night, if we get the chance," said Hayward. "But we may have to go up to Fort Scully with them. You go up with Kelly and he will show you where his room is, and you can go there and wait until we come back."

All the way to the corner, where Hayward took leave of them, they talked about the robbery, and Claude again impressed upon Hayward the dire calamity that would happen to him if they allowed Thompson to put his hands behind him. Hayward grinned and kept on to his own room, while Kelly and Claude kept on to Kelly's room, and by the

time they reached it Kelly had thought up another method of raising money out of Carl.

"I have several checks in my pocket on different banks, and I will make one of them out for a hundred dollars or so," said he, "and perhaps I can borrow——"

"You had better let that out," said Claude hastily. "Whenever you begin to talk money to him, he'll shut up and go away from you."

"Of course I want to try it merely to see if he has the funds," said Kelly. "I don't care anything about a hundred dollars while he has so much more."

"And there is another thing that you must look out for," said Claude. "I had almost forgotten to mention it. Mr. Morphy told him this morning not to make friends with anybody. If you behave at all friendly with him, and act as though you had seen him before, the fat will all be in the fire."

"That old Morphy posted him on a good many scrapes, didn't he?" said Kelly, with a wink that spoke volumes. "I can tell how to manage him when I see him."

Kelly's room was about what Claude had

made up his mind to see after his meeting with him. It was in a tumble-down tenement-house at the head of two flights of stairs, and when Kelly produced the key from his pocket and opened the door, Claude found himself in a small seven-by-nine apartment which was almost destitute of furniture. Some dishes from which Kelly had eaten his supper were on the table, still unwashed; and the bed, from which he had arisen that morning, did not look as though it had been made up for a week. There was only one chair in the room, and Kelly gave it a shove with his foot, at the same time turning toward his trunk to get out some clothing.

"Sit down there," said he. "I can remember when I did not have such a room as this; but that was before I got to travelling on my own hook. I suppose you had a better room than this out West?"

"Well, I had more furniture in it, but it was not such a room as I would have put a stranger in," said Claude, who did not want to let Kelly see how little he thought of his quarters.

He then changed the subject by referring to Carl and Thompson. It was a matter of some moment to him, for what should he do in case these men made the attempt and failed? He did not like to think of it.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A HARD FIGHT.

IN a short time Kelly had produced from his trunk some clothing which he put on, and when he announced that he was all ready Claude turned and looked at him. He would not have known that it was the same person who had conducted him to his room. Aside from the marks of dissipation which were plainly visible on his face, he looked to be just what he represented—a traveller out on business.

“Now all I want is to get shaved, and you can stay outside the shop and stop Hayward when he comes along,” said Kelly.

“If his clothing has changed him as much as it has you I don’t believe I will know him,” said Claude.

“He will know you, and that’s all you want. How will this valise do? There is nothing in it, but nobody is going to see the inside of it.”

The valise being pronounced satisfactory, the two went outside into the hall, and Kelly locked the door and gave the key to Claude.

"You may have to stay here for a week; for, as Hayward said, we may have to go up to Fort Scully before we can get a chance to try him on for his money," said he. "We are going to get it before we come back."

"Remember, a third of it is mine," said Claude.

"Of course. We would not have known anything about it if it had not been for you."

It was but a few steps to the barber shop, and Kelly went into it, while Claude stayed outside, walking up and down in front of it for fear the police might come along and order him to "move on." Before he had taken many turns he saw somebody coming up the street with a valise in his hand, who smiled at Claude the moment he caught sight of him. It was Hayward, sure enough, but he never would have recognized him.

"It is a wonder to me how clothes will change a man," said Claude. "Kelly's getting shaved; he will be out directly."

Hayward and Claude had enough to talk over during the time that Kelly was in the barber shop, and when he came out they turned toward the levee, where the Talisman was lying. They accidentally caught sight of Carl and his companion before they got to it, and Claude lost no time in dodging behind the wharf-boat out of their view.

“Did you see those two fellows sitting in chairs on the boiler deck?” said he. “Well, those are the fellows that have the money. Take a look at that man with whiskers, and you will see that his shirt sticks way out here,” he continued, holding his hand as much as a foot or more away from his breast. “I have done all I can for you. It now rests with you.”

The two men started across the wharf-boat, ascended the gang-plank, and disappeared behind the freight in the direction of the stairs. Looking carefully out from his place of concealment, Claude saw them go up to the boiler deck, and, somewhat to his disgust, saw Kelly stop and address some words to Carl.

“If that is the way they are going to work

it I may as well give up," said Claude, as he turned and walked away. "He is not going to make friends with those boys, and he might as well give it up. But, after all, they are pretty sharp."

It was Kelly who spoke to Carl, and when he was waiting for him to answer the question he cast a hurried glance at his companion, and saw that he had the money. If he had had a coat on, he could not have buttoned the garment over it. He gave him a look as he passed, and saw the butts of two ugly revolvers protruding from Thompson's hip pockets.

"Well, we have placed the money," said he in a low tone to his companion, who walked by his side. "The question now is, How are we going to get rid of Carl and double-team on Thompson to keep him from shooting? What's the fare to Fort Scully, please? You have two passengers with whom I am acquainted, and we'll take a room right next to theirs. Room No. 11, have they? Well, then, I will take No. 12."

Their fare was soon paid, their names registered in the books, and Hayward, at his

companion's suggestion, took their valises into their own room, to which the clerk showed him. On the way he noticed that Carl, or whoever had been in that room before him, had come out and left the key in the lock instead of handing it over to the clerk. That much was in his favor. Hayward made a great show of putting his valises away, and then came out into the cabin again and saw that it was empty, the clerk having gone into his office and closed the door. With a quick step Hayward moved to the door of No. 11, noiselessly opened the door, and went in. The valises were just where Carl had left them, stowed away under the bunks. He pulled them out and saw that they were not locked, the springs at the side serving to keep them closed. It was the work of but a very few minutes to "sound" them, but he saw that the money was not there. He tumbled some of the contents of the valises out on the floor in order to make a thorough examination, and before he had time to put them back he heard the cabin door open and Carl and Thompson come in. He was just in time, for

with one bound he reached the outside door of the state-room which opened onto the guards, and ran along until he came to the passage that ran through the cabin. A moment afterward the door he had just left was thrown open and Carl's face was stuck out.

"It is not there," said he to Kelly, whom he found sitting on the boiler deck a short time after these incidents happened.

"Of course you didn't find it," said Kelly. "I told you where the money was when I went in. Thompson has it, as sure as the world."

It seemed a long time before Carl and the cowboy came out again, and when they did, Kelly gave his companion a sly punch in the ribs with his elbow. Carl had taken warning by his experience, or else Thompson had become nervous and refused longer to act as custodian of the money, for it had changed places; in other words, Carl had it. Thompson's revolvers had disappeared and his shirt set naturally, but Carl was the one who was amply developed this time. They stayed there until Kelly began to try to talk with

them, and then they picked up their chairs and took a place on the rail.

"Did you ever see anything work better than this?" said Kelly, when the cowboys had taken up a position some little distance away. "Carl has got the money, and it will be easy enough to get away with him."

"If they will only take to sitting on the rail after dark, we're all right," said Hayward. "That must be our only hope now."

It seemed a long time before the supper-bell rang, and longer still after that until dark came; but finally the dusk of evening began to settle around them, and to their surprise no one came aboard the vessel. The four were there alone. The deck hands were all below, the captain and the clerk were nowhere to be seen, and the cabin boys had gone ashore.

"I guess now is our time," said Kelly.

"Go ahead," said Hayward.

The men arose to their feet and walked toward the cabin to make sure it was deserted, and then stole cautiously around it until they came to the place where the cowboys were

sitting. Thompson was sitting a little nearer the bow than Carl, and him Hayward picked up as if he had been a bag of corn and threw him over the rail toward the water, while Kelly at the same time closed with Carl and bore him to the deck before he could arise from his chair.

We say that Thompson fell toward the water, but he did not go into it. He comprehended the nature of the assault in a moment, and the first thing he did was to clutch at the railing with all his force. One hand caught it, while the other was slipped inside his coat.

“You villain!” said he.

Hayward knew that in a second more Thompson would begin to shoot, and he was equally determined to prevent it, if he could. He struck the cowboy a blow full in the face, and then turned his attention to unclasping his fingers. Thompson could not stand all that, and he released his hold and went down. Hayward had got rid of his share, and when he turned to see how Kelly was getting along, he saw Carl motionless on his back, and his

shirt torn completely off him. A sand-bag attached to Kelly's right wrist explained it all.

"I've got one," said he in a hoarse whisper, passing a bundle wrapped in a newspaper up to Hayward, "and here's the other. Now skip!"

But there was something that both of the men wanted to do before they went away, and that was to get rid of Carl. He knew too much, and might make them some trouble with the police. Without saying a word they picked him up, one at the head and the other at his heels, and tossed him into the river. They waited a moment to listen to the splash, and then walked swiftly away. Without appearing to be in any haste they moved over the wharf-boat and up the levee, but the farther they went the more they increased their pace. They kept a constant watch behind them, but they saw nothing to indicate that they were pursued.

"That's a little the easiest job I ever had," said Hayward, feeling the bundle on the inside of his coat. "That fellow was such an awful man to shoot! If all the cowboys are like him the Indians will eat them up, sure."

"Where do you suppose they are now," said Kelly, who could not resist a thrill of horror at the thought of throwing the men into the river.

"They have gone to Davy Jones's locker, where they ought to be," said Hayward. "We shall never see them again. Now where shall we go first?"

"Up to my room," said Kelly. "'There's where we shall find Claude."

"I say let us go to my room," said Hayward. "We can count the money there, and he need not know any thing about it."

"Do you intend to cheat Claude?" asked Kelly in surprise.

"I don't know that there will be any cheating about it. He knew where the money was, and we got it. He thought we were going to fail; that was what was the matter with him."

"We didn't fail, and through him we got money that we wouldn't have been able to earn in a lifetime," said Kelly earnestly. "I won't cheat Claude. You can go to your room if you want to, and I will divide my profits with him."

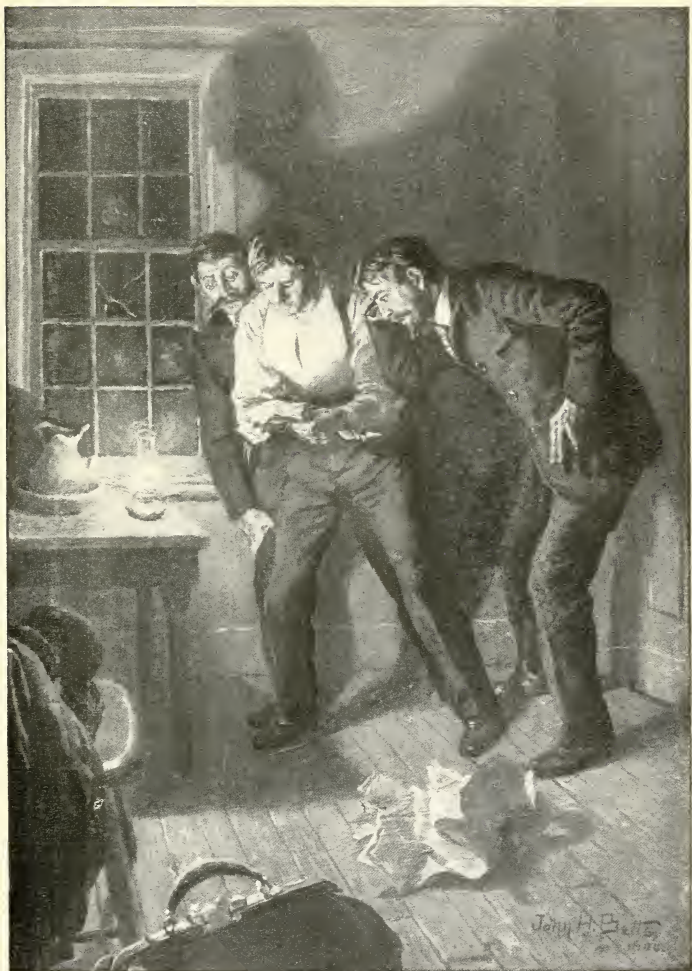
Hayward did not say anything after this, but Kelly noticed that when he turned toward his room his companion went also. When they got to the door they tried to open it, but the apartment was fastened.

"Who is that?" asked a voice from the inside.

It was Claude who gave the challenge. He was sitting, with his feet on the window-sill, watching the lamp, which gave out a dim light through its smoky chimney, threatening every moment to go out and leave him in darkness. But his thoughts were far away from there. He was dreaming about Carl and his money, and wondering what was going to become of him if Kelly and his friend were baffled in their attempts to win it. He had mistrusted Kelly ever since he saw him speak to Carl, and had pretty nearly given up all hope; but the sound of the latch when the door was tried made his heart bound with exultation.

"It is me," said Kelly. "Open up."

It was all Claude could do to find the key, but he finally opened the door. A glance at their faces was sufficient for him.



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"You've got it!" he almost gasped.

"You are right, I have," replied Kelly.
"There's my pile, and Hayward has the rest."

"It was not done up this way when it left the bank," said Claude, a suspicion creeping over him. "It has been done up since we left there."

He believed then, as he believed afterward, that Kelly had been duped. With hands that trembled in spite of himself he tore off the outside covering, and nothing but a bundle of paper revealed itself. With a yell that could have been heard over the house he scattered the paper all over the floor, but no money appeared. Kelly and Hayward looked on with astonishment, and then the latter tore his own bundle to pieces; but it, too, was filled with paper. Claude backed toward the chair and sank into it. He seemed to have lost all power over himself, for his hands hung by his side as limp as a piece of wet rope.

CHAPTER XXV.

A BLOW FOR NOTHING.

“**T**HOMPSON, don’t ever let me go out of this room again and leave the key in the lock,” said Carl, as he closed the outer door of his state-room and threw the catch into place. “That was not a very bright trick on my part. It is what caused all this trouble.”

“Show me the man who did this and I will make a spread eagle of him right here,” said Thompson, placing his hand behind him.

“Put up your pistol,” exclaimed Carl angrily. “If you shoot one of those men you will only alarm the whole boat; and, besides, you can’t prove anything. But I have just thought of something. Sit down here close to me, so that you can hear what it is.”

It did not take Carl very long to tell Thompson what he had on his mind, and when he told him how the money would be

safe hereafter, his companion jumped up and drew the funds out of his bosom.

"But are you sure the clerk won't steal it?" he asked. "Eight thousand dollars is a heap of money for some people to have."

"Of course I am sure of it," said Carl. "It is his business to take valuables that his customers may have and lock them up in the safe. Take your revolvers from your hip pockets and put them on the inside of your coat, and I will give mine to the clerk."

The first thing was to wrap up the money in a piece of newspaper, and the second was to do up two more bundles as near like the first as they could, and these Carl put on the inside of his shirt. Then he picked up the money package and laid his hand upon the door.

"I like the idea of giving up the money because I never did want to take it in the first place," said Thompson. "But I don't like you to have it. Those men could take you down easy enough."

"Perhaps they will not attempt it. They may suspect what we have done with the

money, and in that case they will go away and let us alone."

Carl cautiously opened the door of his state-room, and through the glass at the front of the cabin he saw the two men sitting on the boiler deck, with their backs toward the office. They walked lightly toward the room where the clerk was without attracting the attention of the men, and pounded upon it. In an instant the door came open to them.

"Not a word out of you," whispered Carl. "There may be some men aboard this boat who might take it into their heads to rob me, and I have here eight thousand dollars which I beg you will take and lock up for me."

"Whew!" whistled the clerk. "Are you sure the money is in that package?"

"To be sure I am. I just put it there."

"I would like to see it before I touch it. Unwrap it."

Of course that was nothing more than fair for the clerk, for he did not want to take the package and find that there was nothing of value in it. Carl readily took off the wrappings, and showed him the pile of greenbacks.

"That's all right," said the clerk. "Do it up again. There are only two persons aboard this boat, and one of them says he is acquainted with you."

"The man never told you a bigger lie in his life," said Carl indignantly. "I never saw him until to-day."

"Do you say that he has an eye on this money? Then we'll have him put off."

"But we can't prove anything against them."

"Can't eh?" Thompson almost shouted.

"Don't talk so loud," said Carl hastily. "We don't want those men to know where we are. The fact of the matter is we left our valises in our state-rooms, and when we went in there we found our clothes all over the floor. Thompson wanted to shoot those men, but I knew he would only make matters worse."

"Do you think those men had a hand in it?" asked the clerk. "I'll just watch them," he added, as he took the package and locked it up in his safe.

"That's all right. Now I wish you would

put my revolvers with it. They are not loaded. Thompson will feel safer if he has his on, where he can put his hands on them."

After a little more talk on the subject the clerk went out on the guards, and while he was there the cowboys slipped out behind him and came into the cabin through the passageway which communicated with the cook's galley. They went out on the boiler deck and stayed there until Kelly began to talk about money, and then they removed their chairs around by the side of the cabin, onto the guards. But if Carl had seen Kelly punch his companion in the ribs with his elbow, he would have known that that part of his plot had been successful. The boys stayed around on the guards until after supper, and even when the shades of night began to gather about them; they remained there until it got so dark that they could scarcely see their hands before them. This was the time that Kelly told his companion that it was the season for them to begin. Their attack upon them was so sudden that it was all over before they had time to think about it. Carl saw Thompson

thrown overboard, and before he could cry out or lift a finger he received a stunning blow on the head, and then all was blank to him.

But it was not so with Thompson. The latter was a strong man, and Hayward had scarcely picked him up before he was fighting. He clutched his assailant around the head with one hand, while with the other he attempted to save himself from going overboard. But Hayward was on the alert. He pulled himself away from Thompson's encircling grasp and threw him over the railing; but the cowboy, whose arms and legs appeared to be everywhere, caught onto the railing with his left hand while the other slid inside of his coat. A moment more and Hayward could not have told anything about that scrape, for he would have been laid out with a bullet in his brain; but he struck him a fierce blow in the face, unclasped his fingers, and Thompson went down.

But the blow did not deprive him of consciousness. He found, in going down to the water, that he had struck upon one of the

fenders which are used to keep the steamer off from a wharf-boat when making a landing. His arms and legs instinctively closed around it, and, in place of going into the water, Thompson slid down until his feet rested on the lower guard. He had barely time to swing himself on board the boat when he heard a splash behind him. He turned and looked at it, and there was Carl, limp and lifeless, going down with the current. Something that sounded very much like an oath came from Thompson's lips as he let go his hold upon the fender and struck out to Carl's assistance.

If there was anything Thompson could do better than herding cattle it was to swim. With a few swift strokes he was near enough to seize Carl, and the first thought that came into his mind was that the villains, not satisfied with getting his money, had made an end of him then and there. He took Carl around the waist, lifted his head above water, and swam toward the boat. Swimming now was a necessity for him, for just below him was a sidewheel steamer coming in, and if he got

down under her guards it was a question whether or not he would ever come up again. He made headway through the water as he had never made it before, and presently caught hold of the fender that came down opposite the engine room.

“Hi there, some of you fellows!” shouted Thompson. “Lend us a hand here.”

Fortunately the engineer was not busy. He stood watching the deck hands as they were carrying the freight aboard, and he heard the hail coming from the water. He ran to the side, and with a “Heaven bless my soul! How did you get in?” he seized Carl and lifted him upon the guards. “Is he dead?” he asked, with some anxiety in his tones.

“No; but he may as well be,” said Thompson. “Now, then, help me out. I know the fellows that did all this, and if I can find them——”

Thompson could not wait to say any more. He left Carl where he had fallen and ran up the stairs to the boiler deck; but he might as well have saved himself the trouble, for Kelly and his friend were across the wharf-boat and

well on their way up the levee. There were the chairs, in which they had been sitting, both overturned, but the men who did the business were nowhere in sight. Before he returned to Carl he looked all over the boat, but still he could not see anything of Kelly and Hayward.

"Here's the bump that did all the mischief," said the engineer, pointing to a wound on the back of Carl's head. "He must have been hit with something. What was the fuss all about, anyway?"

"Carl knows, and when he gets ready perhaps he will tell you about it," said Thompson. "Is he never going to speak to me again?"

"Oh, yes. He's coming around all right now. You had better take him upstairs and put him in his bunk."

"I had not been off the boat twenty minutes before this thing happened," said the clerk, who came up at the time Carl was beginning to show signs of coming to. "I have had an eye on them ever since Mr. Preston told me about it."

"What did he do?" repeated the engineer.

There were a good many deck hands standing around by this time, and the clerk did not think it best to speak about the money. He replied that they wanted to whip Carl for something he had done; and taking him under one arm, while Thompson took hold of the other, they took him up to his bunk and put him into it.

"It beats the world what that fellow hit me with," said Carl, placing his hand to his head. "He struck me with something besides his fist."

"I suppose it was a sand-bag," said the clerk. "A scoundrel can carry one of them up his sleeve until he gets ready to use it."

"Well, they didn't get the money, anyway," said Carl, drawing a long breath of relief. "Where are you going, Thompson?"

"I am going out to have those men arrested. If I can find a policeman anywhere——"

To the surprise of both Thompson and the clerk, Carl interfered.

"I beg that you will do nothing of the kind," said he. "Thompson, come back here and sit down."

This was said in the form of an order, and Thompson had nothing to do but obey. Carl settled back on his pillow and closed his eyes, and the clerk, readily divining that he was not wanted there, got up to go.

"If you can think of anything you want, don't fail to send Thompson after it and you shall have it," said he.

Carl said he would bear that in mind, and when he was alone with the cowboy he exclaimed:

"Don't you see that if you arrested those men you would get Claude into a mess?"

"No, I don't. Did Claude have a hand in sending those men here?"

"Of course he did. As soon as he got ashore he went and got those fellows to come here and steal the money; and if they should be caught, don't you see how easy it would be for them to tell on him?"

"And you want to let him go free because he is your cousin?"

"That's it exactly. I am doing just as I believe my father would do if he were here. Besides, you would be held as a witness. I

don't know how long it will be before court sits, probably a month or six weeks, and you would have to lay in jail all that time."

Thompson had no more to say after that. He did not know how a jail looked on the inside—he didn't want to, for if it looked as badly as it did on the outside it was gloomy enough—and the idea of staying there for six weeks filled the foreman with apprehension.

"Dog-gone the boy, let him go!" said he.

"That is what I say. Now, I want you to stay here."

Carl hoped they would be allowed to finish their journey in peace, and that no further attempts would be made to steal that miserable money. By the time the boat started he had recovered from his blow so that he could be on deck, and by the time they arrived at Fort Scully he was overjoyed to find his boat there. The clerk gave Carl his money with the remark that it was a pity he did not see his way clearly toward having those men arrested, for now they would be encouraged to go on another expedition of the same kind, and saw him go ashore. In process of time their

little boat carried them in safety to Fort Yates, and, as it was early in the morning, they hitched up their team and started for home.

“Thank goodness that trip is made,” said Carl, who felt like yelling when he found himself on the prairie again, “and I hope it will be long before I am called upon to make another. Thompson, I will not take you with me, anyhow.”

“Shake,” said the foreman extending his hand. “I would sooner be here with the cattle. But if it had not been for me you would have gone under the wheels of that steamer.”

“Well, I guess that is so,” said Carl.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE NEW SCOUT.

THE prairie home of Carl, the Trailer, seemed very inviting to him after the thrilling scenes through which he had passed on the Mississippi, and sometimes he was almost tempted to send word to the commander of the fort that certain circumstances over which he had no control would keep him at home. There everybody was friendly to him, his word was law, and it was reasonable to suppose that he could get along with them better than he could with strangers. But whichever way he turned he found something to remind him of his father, and he hoped that, surrounded with new associations and new scenes, he would be led to forget the past and so begin life anew.

“Now, Thompson,” said Carl, “when he found himself in the office, and the money which had cost him so much trouble was laid out on the table, “I begin by carrying out

the conditions of the will this very afternoon. You want two thousand dollars; and I may add that, in giving it to you, I give it with my full and free consent. You have earned it by your strict attention to duty, and if you ever want any more money come to me and get it."

This was almost too much for Thompson to stand. He looked around for a chair, and when he found it he dropped helplessly into it. No man could have stood a "cussing" better than he, but when it came to such talk as this, it took all the pluck out of him.

"Are you still going to the fort?" he managed to ask.

"Yes, I must go there. I promised the colonel, and I always like to keep my word."

"Will you be gone long?"

"I shall be gone until I learn to be as good a scout as there is attached to headquarters. We are going to see war pretty soon——"

"Now, I hope you won't pay any attention to what those teamsters at Fort Yates said to you," said Thompson in disgust. "The Sioux have got whipped so bad that they will never try it again."

"But you see, Thompson, there are more of them here than there are of us. Sitting Bull isn't going to be quiet for any length of time. There's your money. Count it."

"Well, I guess it is all right, and I won't count it, if you please," said Thompson slowly. "When do you start for the fort?"

"To-morrow morning bright and early. I need not ask you to keep an eye on things while I am gone. I will be up here every few days, just to see how things are getting along."

Thompson had already said all he could to keep Carl at home, and he knew that it was breath wasted. He went out and sent in the cook to get his money, and then seated himself on the doorstep and rested his head on his hands. One by one the men were settled with according to the terms of his father's will, and after that Carl put on his hat and went out to his sire's grave. How long he stayed there no one knew, but when he came back his eyes were red and he went into his own room.

The next morning, however, Carl was himself again. He ate a hearty breakfast, shook

the men warmly by the hand, and set off at a gallop. He was dressed in a suit that was more becoming to him than the one he wore to St. Louis. He wore a tight-fitting suit of moleskin, with a Mexican sombrero and heavy gauntlet gloves. At his waist he carried his revolver, and at his back his Winchester rifle, supported by a broad band which crossed his breast. In his saddle-bags he carried an extra suit, another pair of boots, a shirt or two, and ammunition for his rifle. His horse was a mustang, small and clean-limbed, and although he did not move as though he had any "go" in him, his rider was willing to ride him a twenty-mile race with any horse on the plains. Taken altogether he was a very fancy-looking scout, as some of the soldiers said when he drew up to report to the colonel; but they found out that there was something more than fancy about him when he came to fulfill his duty.

"Well, Carl, I am glad to see you," said the colonel, as the orderly took in his name. He had left his horse outside in the hands of a teamster, and his rifle and saddle-bags were

on the porch. "I have business for you right away," added the colonel; "but first I want to know how much you are going to charge me."

"I want nothing, sir, except my board," said Carl.

"Nothing?" exclaimed the commander. "And will you be ready to go night and day whenever I shall call upon you?"

Carl replied that he would.

"That is cheap enough. You had better take another horse, for I am going to send you to Fort Yates."

"I guess my horse will do for that journey," said Carl with a smile. "I am more used to him than I am to any other animal."

And so it came about that Carl, the Trailer, got a position without going out of his own country. For two years he stayed there at the fort, making occasional trips to his ranch to see how things were going on there, and every time the colonel called for him he was there. He boarded with the teamsters while he was at the fort, but his favorite duty, and the one he most delighted in, was guiding the

hunting expeditions to the mountains to get fresh meat for the garrison. Every time Carl went off in this way he was certain to come back with his wagons well filled.

CHAPTER XXVII.

OFF TO THE FRONT.

BUT Carl's way was not clear yet. He had one hundred and twenty-five miles to go before he would be among friends, and not a mouthful to eat while he was travelling that distance. It was true that he had revolvers in his pockets, and that jack rabbits were plenty. He had matches, too, in his possession, so that he could cook the meat after he shot it, but the report of his revolver might start the Indians looking for him. The boy thought of this as he sped on his way, and by the time daylight arrived he stood upon the banks of Grand River, which separated him from the trail that led to Fort Scott. Before he took to the willows he looked cautiously around, but there were no Indians to be seen.

"Those Indians who were going to the Bad Lands to fight the whites must have gone by the upper trail," said Carl, as he took off his

blanket and drew his revolvers, which he took in one hand and held above his head. "If that is the case I am all right. Lie there," he added, throwing the blanket into the willows. "I have carried you twenty-five miles, and you haven't done me any good, either."

Carl took another glance around to make sure that the way was clear, and entered the water. He did not know how deep the water was, but by swimming and wading alternately he managed to cross the river, and without any more reconnoitering he struck out straight for the fort. During all his lonely journey he did not see an Indian, or a white man, either, to whom he could give the news of Sitting Bull's death—for it was the source of a great deal of satisfaction to him. The brains of the Sioux nation were gone, and where would they look to find another man to take his place? Every time he thought of it he felt like yelling; and one time he did raise his voice, but stopped all of a sudden, and glanced around to see if there was anybody within hearing.

The day passed away and night came on,

but the fort was every moment drawing nearer. He was tired and sleepy, but he could not think of stopping to rest until he conveyed the news to the commander of Fort Scott. He was certain that there had not been anybody along the trail, for he would have seen them; so he was going to be the first to carry the information. About twelve o'clock he became aware that he was at his journey's end. He heard a challenge directly in front of him, and Carl came to a standstill. It seemed to him that the corporal was a long time in coming, but he heard the gate unfastened at last, and the non-commissioned officer came out.

"Who are you?" he asked, bending over and looking into Carl's face.

"Well, I guess I have got a right here," said the young scout. "Don't you know me?"

"By gracious!" exclaimed the corporal. "Carl, the Trailer!"

"That is just what they call me when I am here among friends. I am tired and sleepy, but I want first to see the colonel. I have a report to make to him."

"Come in. Lieutenant Parker is officer of the guard, and I know he will be delighted to see you. He has been on nettles every time your name is mentioned."

Lieutenant Parker was standing in front of his quarters waiting to see what the corporal was going to find outside the gate, and when he saw the two coming along the parade he came quickly toward them.

"I have got him, sir," said the corporal.

If we were to say that the two boys were delighted to see each other we should fall far short of the truth. Carl held out his hand, but the lieutenant paid no attention to it. He rushed in, caught Carl around his arms, and whirled him with his feet clear of the ground, all unmindful of the presence of the corporal. Then he put him down and seized him by the hand.

"I tell you I can rest in peace now," said Parker. "Carl, how do you do? How did you escape?"

"I've got a long story to tell you," said Carl, "but first I must see the colonel. I ought to report to him the first thing I do."

"Come in here with me just a minute and then you can call on the colonel," said the lieutenant, leading the way into his quarters. "I want to look at you."

"Say," said Carl in a lower tone, as the lieutenant closed the door behind him, "Sitting Bull is dead."

Parker had picked up a chair to place it for Carl to sit down, but he stopped when these words fell upon his ear and put the chair down again.

"Yes, sir," said Carl. "He resisted arrest and he was shot dead."

"Why—why—who told you?" asked Parker.

"A courier came into the camp and reported it, and I jumped at the chance for escape."

"Who killed him?"

"The Indian police. Now, do you think I ought to report that to the colonel or wait until morning?"

"Go at once and report it. So Sitting Bull is dead. Come back here after you see the colonel and tell me your story."

"I will, after I get something to eat and put some extra clothes on. I haven't had these duds off for a week."

"I will get you something to eat," said the lieutenant. "I am anxious to hear what Sitting Bull did."

The two boys went out, and Carl bent his steps toward the colonel's room. The orderly, who sat at a table in the hall reading, was overjoyed to see Carl once more, and after listening to his report that he had something to say to the commander that ought not to be kept until to-morrow, went into where the colonel was lying.

"He will see you," said he. "He won't get up."

The colonel was sitting up in bed, striving with both hands to make his few gray hairs cover his bald head, but he extended a palm to Carl and greeted him warmly.

"So General Miles took me at my word, did he?" he asked.

"General Miles?" repeated Carl. "I don't know what you mean, sir."

"Why, I sent him notice that you had

been captured by the Sioux band when they were not on the warpath, and requested him to demand your surrender."

"This is the first I heard of it, sir," said Carl, who wondered that the colonel thought so much of him as all that. "If he sent any word to the Sioux I don't know it."

The commander looked surprised but said nothing, and Carl went on with his report. He looked more surprised as he listened, asked a few questions to get at all Carl knew about the matter, and finally said:

"It serves him right. This Sioux war won't amount to much."

After a few moments' conversation, during which Carl told him of the way he had escaped, he went out and found Lieutenant Parker waiting for him, who told him he would find everything he wanted to eat in the officers' quarters, and that as soon as he had changed his clothes, and had taken the sharp edge off his appetite, he was expected to tell his story. Carl hurried away, and in half an hour more he was in Lieutenant Parker's quarters, who was out somewhere, but when he came in a

few moments later he found Carl filling up for a smoke.

"I tell you, Parker, my pipe was the only friend I had while I was posting along that prairie in the direction of the fort," said he, as he pulled a match from his pocket and struck a light. "It could not say anything to me, but I drew almost as much encouragement from it as I would from my horse, if I had had one."

The young scout then seated himself and went on with his story, omitting no detail that he thought would be at all interesting to Lieutenant Parker. When he told of the Ghost Dance, he held his excited auditor spellbound.

"It was the queerest thing in the shape of a dance that I ever heard of," said Carl. "There was literally nothing that was interesting about it. They go round and round until they get tired, and then they drop."

"Did you see anybody in a trance?" asked Parker.

"No, I got tired of watching the thing and went to sleep. If any one was tormented in that way it was after dark."

Carl stayed up with the lieutenant all that night, and when morning came and they were relieved he went off to his quarters to find a little rest in sleep. But all the teamsters were up, and he had to go through with the same thing again. Of course he did not say anything about Sitting Bull's death. He had made a report of that to the colonel, and he wisely decided that the information could come through him. Everywhere he was regarded as a hero, but no one could understand why Harding had suddenly become so lenient to him.

"I guess Harding has not got much stomach for a fight," said one of the teamsters; "I don't believe he thinks there is going to be one;" and this was the general verdict of all of them. But finally it came out, nobody knew how, that Sitting Bull was dead. Of course everybody was excited when they heard of it, but there were not a few who believed, with the colonel, "that this Sioux war won't amount to much." What was their surprise, however, when a white courier rode into the fort about ten o'clock that morning, on a horse

almost ready to drop with fatigue, and brought a letter from General Miles. Of course there were plenty of soldiers around who saw him go in, and they were wrought up to the highest pitch of excitement while waiting for some one to come out.

"I tell you, Carl, there is something up," whispered Parker to the young scout. "That man never came here with all that haste for nothing. We are going to see something."

"I hope you can go," said Carl. "I won't see any fun at all if you are left behind."

"You will go, won't you?"

"Of course I will. If the Indians are going to have a dressing down, I am going to have a hand in it."

The two curbed their impatience as well as they could and watched the colonel's door. In a few moments the orderly came out on a run and bent his steps toward the adjutant's quarters; and in a second more out came that officer, bareheaded and with no coat on, and straightway went into the colonel's room. This made the boys more inclined to believe that "there was something up," and this became

realized when the adjutant came out and called for the trumpeter.

“Now we are going to hear it,” said Parker. “I hope they will call for Company D the first thing.”

The men at a distance took up the call for “the trumpeter,” sounding it out loud and clear, and presently the man appeared with his instrument in his hand. He exchanged a few words with the adjutant, then threw back his head and put his trumpet to his lips. He did not blow the call for any particular company, but he blew the general muster of the cavalry; whereupon Parker almost jumped from the ground.

“Whoopee! I am going,” said he, seizing Carl’s arm with a grip that astonished him. “You must go, too. Where’s your horse?”

This was something that Carl had not yet had time to attend to—getting a horse to replace the one that he had left in the hands of the Sioux. The very first man he came to was a teamster who had a couple of horses, and he raised no objections whatever to loaning Carl the best one in the lot.

"It won't take you long to decide which one is the best," said he, as he led the way out of the gate, "'cause one is about as good as the other. They don't look as though they had any get up about them, but you get on 'em and try 'em."

"Will he run fast if the Indians get after him?" asked Carl, as he slipped a bridle on the horse while the teamster put a saddle on his back.

"Are you going out after the Indians?" inquired the man in surprise. "By George! you want to look out."

"That is the reason I asked the question."

"I have never seen this horse in a race, but I bet you he will get there. Look out that they don't play the same trick on you that they played upon Custer."

"I will look out for that. You come in on the parade-ground and hold him while I get my things."

When Carl hurried through the gate he saw a long line of cavalry drawn up on the parade-ground, with their officers at the head, and the adjutant was just going into the colonel's

door to tell him that the troops were all present or accounted for. They were all sitting stiffly in their saddles, waiting for the word to move. They were waiting to see, too, who was going to command them ; but in a few seconds after the adjutant disappeared the colonel came to the door, and then this question was answered. He had his greatcoat on, a pair of heavy gauntlet gloves on his hands, and the point of a sabre dragged on the ground behind him.

“That’s all right,” said Carl, making haste into his room. “Now we will see how much the colonel knows about fighting Indians.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

GETTING READY FOR THE FIGHT.

ALL the cavalry stationed at Fort Scott was in line. The "Sorrels," the "Blacks," the "Grays" and the "Bays"—so called from the color of the horses they rode—were there, eager for a move; and they all had their heavy overcoats on, and were equipped for a long and heavy march. The weather was as fine as anybody could ask for at that season of the year; the mornings were crisp and cold—just the time to put both horses and men in good trim for a headlong gallop; but everybody knew that by the time they got back again they would bring a blizzard with them.

Lieutenant Parker sat erect on his horse, with his eyes "straight to the front, striking the ground at a distance of fifteen yards;" but he had an eye out for Carl, the Trailer. Without turning his head he saw him rush

into his room, and when he came out again he did not look much like the boy who had gone in a few moments before. He was bundled up all ready for a march. He saw him mount his horse—a sorry-looking old horse it was, too—ride around in the rear of the line, and take up a position a short distance behind his friend. The colonel exchanged a few words with the captain he was going to leave in command of the post, and then turned to the adjutant, who started off to put the column in motion. “Fours right!” he shouted; and in a few minutes the men were through the gate and threading their way across the prairie.

“I declare, you got a horse, didn’t you?” said the lieutenant, who, now that the line was fairly in motion, could talk all he wanted to. “Who’s is it? I hope the Indians will not get after us. If they do, you are gone up.”

“Where are we going—do you know?” asked Carl.

“I don’t know for certain, but from something I heard the colonel tell the adjutant I

think we are going down to the Bad Lands," answered Lieutenant Parker. "We are in pursuit of Big Foot, who became alarmed at the death of Sitting Bull and is running off to save himself."

"If the Indians would just come in and behave themselves they would save lots of lives by it."

The Bad Lands were quite a distance from Fort Scott—one hundred and ninety-two miles as the crow flies. In order to get upon the trail of Big Foot they were obliged to go across the Cheyenne reservation, through a section of South Dakota, which at that time was not given up to any Indians, and go the whole length of Pine Ridge reservation, before they would come up with him. How the general knew so soon that he was going to run away, was a mystery. Probably he knew something about Big Foot that others did not know, and had had his eye upon him for a long time. He feared Big Foot, with his little band of six hundred Sioux, more than he did the other Indians, and he thought that if he could get him to surrender the Sioux war

would be brought to an end at once. But Big Foot had ninety miles the start of him, and those who have followed Indians while they were retreating from a foe know that he would travel night and day but that he would reach his destination before his pursuers did.

The Indians, when they go on the warpath, do not generally take much in the way of plunder to hinder their movements. Everything is thrown away except that which they actually need. Their squaws and children are mounted on fast horses, and they must keep up with the men or stand the chance of being captured. They even throw away their tepee poles, and that is something they do not often do. If they camp in a place where poles cannot be found they have to sleep out in the open air, and an Indian says that is not good for him. When they reach the Bad Lands they are comparatively safe. Nobody knows where those gullies and ravines lead to except the Indian; he knows where he can get water when he wants it, and he knows where the gullies afford the best purpose of resistance. It is no wonder that the Indians go there

when they get into trouble. Carl knew all this, and was explaining it to the lieutenant as they rode along.

"We ought to have some guns along so as to get them out of those ravines," said Parker. "If we could get an enfilading fire on them _____"

"Well, perhaps we shall pick up some guns as we go along," said Carl. "But I know that it is useless to try them with small arms. Give an Indian five minutes' start and you will never see him again. Just wait until you see the Bad Lands. There is not a tree or a bush on it, and how the Indians can live there beats me."

At this moment the adjutant galloped up and interrupted their conversation.

"Preston, the colonel wants you out ahead," said he.

"I don't know whether I can show him the way or not," said Carl, a little taken back by this order. "But I will have to go and try. Good-by, Parker. I'll see you when we get into a fight with the Indians."

Carl rode up and saluted the colonel, and

was ordered to put himself on the trail and go ahead as fast as his pony could stand it. The trail was plain enough,—it had been made by the Indians while going to and from the Pine Ridge Agency,—and Carl at once put his pony into a trot and followed it up without any hesitation at all. The column was kept closed up all the while, and there was no talking allowed in the ranks. They kept on until they reached some willows that fringed the banks of a stream, and there the colonel announced that they would stop to allow their horses a few moments of rest and to wait for the wagons, which were lumbering along some distance in the rear. At the end of an hour, having eaten their dinner and smoked their pipes, the column mounted again and set off in pursuit of Big Foot.

“Well, Carl, what do you think of it?” asked the colonel, as he rode up beside the scout, who was going along in his usual trot. “Is this what you came to the fort for—to hunt Indians?”

“Yes, sir; but I think you had better hold up a bit,” answered Carl. “Your horses do

not act as though they could stand it, and they will be pretty well played out to-night."

"Why, your horse doesn't seem to mind it a bit," said the colonel.

"No, sir, because he is a mustang. Leave him at the stable lines for six months and he will go just the same as he does now; but your horses have not been used to this."

The colonel thought it was about time that he was turning back to look at his animals, and he found that Carl was right when he spoke about the horses being "played out." Half the horses were moving along with their heads down as if almost on the point of going to sleep, and it was only when their riders slyly punched them with their spurs that they began to take an interest in going ahead. The colonel spoke to his adjutant, and presently the column came down to a walk.

At night, just as the sun was setting, they came within sight of Big Foot's camp. There was no one there, but everything bore evidence to a hurried departure by the original owners. Of course the column prepared for night by examining into things. The horses

were staked out and placed under a guard; farther out there were other dismounted men who looked after the safety of the camp, and others went to work to prepare supper. Carl took care of his pony and then strolled about the camp to see what things had been left behind by the Indians. The camp reminded him of a town that had been burned by fire. The lodge poles were up in every direction, but the tepees themselves had disappeared. Counting them, and taking into consideration the fact that ten or twelve Indians occupied one lodge, he came to the conclusion that there were fully six hundred men and women in the whole camp. And half of them were armed and willing to fight; and, besides, he did not know how many more they would pick up on their way to the Bad Lands.

“Look at this,” said Parker, who had got through with his duties of the camp and came out to see what he could find. As he spoke he picked up a frying-pan which he had found in one of the tepees. “But I don’t see anything but cooking utensils. Where are the weapons?”

"The weapons are in the hands of the Indians and are well on their way to the Bad Lands by this time," said Carl. "He does not need cooking utensils, but he does need weapons, as you may find out one of these days."

The officers, one and all, searched the camp; but all they could find were articles of clothing, head-dresses, and things that the Indians could do without. Nothing in the shape of weapons could be found. At last there was a call to supper, and after that they sat about the fires and smoked. A good many of the soldiers had seen deserted camps before; and, in view of the hard ride that was coming on the morrow, they prepared for it by rolling themselves up in their blankets and going to sleep.

There was not a sound to disturb them during the night. At reveille the men all sprang up and were ready to face the duties of the day, whether it was to remain in the saddle or to fight Indians.

"I don't forget what they did to Custer," said a soldier who picketed his horse near

Carl's, "and I want to get a chance at them for that. I haven't been in many fights since that happened, but when I have been in one, I didn't take any prisoners. If we get into a fuss now before we come back, you may bet your bottom dollar that every one I shoot at stays there."

"Do all the men feel that way?" asked Carl.

"Yes, sir, every one of them," said the soldier earnestly. "A person who does not feel that way has got no business in the army."

Carl looked at the soldier as he walked off with his horse. He was tall and broad-shouldered, and looked as though he might whip all the Indians who could get around him. He thought of what he said a few days afterward, when he saw him in a fight. He saw plenty of Indians drop before his aim, but he did not see him bring in any prisoners.

While the men were grooming their horses, which they did with little tufts of grass that came handy to them, the orderly sergeants called the roll without looking into any books ;

after which they reported to the adjutant, and the adjutant reported to the colonel. Very soon "Boots and saddles" was called, and in a few moments the column was on the march.

Carl took the lead, as he did on a former occasion, and about three o'clock in the afternoon they came within sight of a camp of soldiers. Colonel Forsyth was the commanding officer, and to him the report was made. He ordered the cavalry to take up their positions on the opposite ravine, so as to have the Indians surrounded when they came in to deliver up their arms.

"I have some trustworthy Indians out now, looking for some that got into the Bad Lands," said Colonel Forsyth, "and I am looking for them to come in every day. When they come in we'll disarm them, and then we would like to see them raise another fuss."

"Say, Parker, look at that," said Carl, as the cavalry moved on to its position. "We have some guns."

"Where?" said the lieutenant, looking all around.

“Over there on the hill. When the Sioux come in they will be camped over there on the plain, and if they attempt any outbreak the guns will mow them down right and left.

“They are Hotchkiss guns, too. We are not going to see any fight with the Indians. While the colonel was reporting, there was an officer told me that there is a whole body of troops in the Bad Lands; so the best thing they can do is to surrender.”

“This ravine is the only thing that bothers me,” said the colonel, as he rode to his position and gave the necessary orders for preparing camp. “Suppose those Indians come in here and object to giving up their arms. Don’t you see that they can take to the ravine and run out, and we could not stop them? Those guns there would shoot over the ravine and hurt some of us.”

And the colonel was right in his suspicions. Some of the Indians made use of that ravine to get back to the Bad Lands. The guns were moved up in time to cover the ravine, but some of the Sioux managed to get away, after all.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE BATTLE OF WOUNDED KNEE.

“IF there is anything I do despise it is to wait on an Indian until he gets ready to do anything,” said Carl, after they had waited three or four days to receive the Sioux who had gone into the Bad Lands. “An Indian has no idea of the value of time, and he thinks that a month or six weeks from now will do the same as though he came in to-morrow. All they want is a dance to make up their minds whether to come in and surrender or not.”

Lieutenant Parker was getting sadly impatient also, and he began to think that the Indians would not come in at all, that they would be alarmed at so many troops coming to surround them, and that they would decide to stay in the Bad Lands and fight it out; but one day they were electrified by the arrival of a courier who rode at once to Colonel Forsyth's tent.

"Something is going to happen now," said Carl. "That man has brought news of some kind."

"Go over there, Carl," said Parker. "Our colonel is there. You are not an enlisted man, and you can go and come when you please."

Carl mounted his horse, which he always kept saddled and ready for instant use, and rode over to Colonel Forsyth's headquarters. He loafed around there for a spell, waiting to hear what was going on, and a few moments later his colonel came out.

"Can you tell me what's up, sir?" said Carl.

"Oh, nothing, only the Indians are coming in at last," answered the officer.

"How many of them are there?"

"About four hundred; but we have eight hundred men here, so I guess they will not attempt any tricks."

Carl rode back to his camp in company with the colonel, who summoned his officers and held a short consultation with them. Parker and the rest of the young officers, who

had never seen a hostile camp before, listened to what Carl had to tell them, and then turned their attention to the pass through which the courier had come out. But it was a long time before the Indians arrived. Just as the sun was setting they came into view, and there were so many of them that Parker grew alarmed.

"Have those Indians all got guns?" he asked. "I don't see anything to indicate the fact."

"They have guns, for you never saw an Indian go on the warpath without one; but they have them hidden where we can't find them," said Carl. "When the order is given to disarm them, you will see what sort of weapons we are going to get—old, worthless things that you wouldn't pick up in the street."

"Then the soldiers will search their tepees for them," said a young officer decidedly.

"Of course; and that is what is going to bring on the fight."

"Are we really going to have a brush with them?"

"I think so, and you may make up your

mind to hear how a bullet whistles as it goes by your head."

"Well, why don't they begin it, if that is what they are up to?"

"It is too late to do anything to-day, but it will keep. You wait until to-morrow and you will wish that you were back at the fort."

"Not much, I won't," said Parker indignantly. "If my men have come out here to fight Indians, I am going in, too."

"I see a big tepee off there, sir," said one of the officers to his captain, who at that moment came up, "and they are carrying somebody into it. Who is that, sir?"

"That is Big Foot, who is ill with pneumonia," answered the captain; "and the doctor who has just gone in to attend to him is Colonel Forsyth's surgeon."

"And there are some soldiers taking in a stove," added the officer. "They are going to warm him up. I supposed that when an Indian became sick he would kick out all the white surgeons and depend entirely on his medicine man."

"So he does, generally," said the captain,

“but old Big Foot is so bad now that he can’t attend to anything. I hope you boys will get a good sleep to-night, for we are going to have fun in the morning.”

But the boys did not get a good sleep, for they were busy thinking of what was going to happen when daylight came—that is, all except Carl, who would have found rest if he had known that the Indians were powerful enough to massacre their whole command. When morning came he was as bright as a lark, while Parker and the other young officers were pale and nervous, and kept looking forward to that order to disarm the Indians which would transform their peaceable camp into a scene that they did not like to think of.

It was the morning of December 29th, and as soon as breakfast was eaten the cavalry mounted their horses and stretched themselves out in a single line far beyond the ground occupied by the Indian encampment, and the infantry moved up within ten yards of their position. The Indians evidently did not like this, for they congregated in little groups, and talked violently, and made motions which

Lieutenant Parker thought meant war and nothing else. Finally an interpreter went among them, and after a long wait the warriors all moved out in a body and seated themselves on the ground. Then Colonel Forsyth took a hand in the matter, and, with the interpreter at his side, told the Indians that he had come out there for the purpose of disarming them, and ordered them back to their tepees to bring out their weapons. A part of the Indians went, and after a long wait they brought out two guns, which they handed to the soldiers.

“That won’t do,” said the colonel in a loud voice. “I want each one of you to bring out the weapons that you use in fighting us. If you don’t do it, my men will go in there and search your houses.”

“Now it is coming,” said Carl in a low tone to his friend, and he got down and buckled up his saddle. “When the soldiers go in there, you can make up your mind to advance.”

The Indians did not move, and all the while Yellow Bird, a medicine man, was walking about among them, blowing on a whistle made

of an eagle bone and talking to them in the Sioux language. He was telling them that they need not be afraid, for their ghost shirts would render the soldiers weak and powerless, and that their bullets would fall harmlessly to the ground.

"If I was Colonel Forsyth I would arrest that Indian the first thing," said Carl, who was rendered awfully impatient by the Sioux actions. "Why don't he make that man talk English."

"What is he doing?" asked Parker.

"I don't catch the words very distinctly, but he is urging them on to fight," said Carl. "I wonder if those Indians have ghost shirts on? If they have, that is what he is depending on."

Still the Indians did not move to go into their tepees and bring out more weapons, and Colonel Forsyth, becoming impatient, ordered the soldiers up closer and sent a party to search the tepees. After a thorough hunt these last returned with about forty rifles, most of which were old and of little value. The search had consumed considerable time,

and created a good deal of excitement among the women and children, as the soldiers found it necessary to overturn the beds and other furniture of the houses, and sometimes to drive the inmates out of doors. One of the searchers, in coming out, attempted to raise the blanket of one of the warriors, and that seemed to be all Yellow Bird was waiting for. Suddenly he stooped down and seized a handful of dust which he threw into the air, and in an instant afterward a young Cheyenne brave threw off his blanket and fired at the soldiers.

“It is come! it is come!” exclaimed Carl, who was so excited that he could hardly sit still on his horse. “That means war. Now get ready.”

The smoke of the warrior's gun had scarcely died away when an answering volley came from the soldiers, and they were so close to the Sioux that the guns almost touched each other. After that all was confusion to Lieutenant Parker, although he tried his best to mind what he was doing. He heard the adjutant shout “Forward!” and drove his horse down the ravine, and Carl was right close behind him.

"Shoot to kill!" said the captain. "Don't throw away a single bullet!"

At first it was not possible for any of the cavalry to shoot, so busy were they in working their way down one side of the gully and up the other; but by the time they were on solid ground once more, the yell that went up from five hundred lungs must have added to the panic of the frightened Indians; for the Indians were frightened, there could be no doubt about that. They fought bravely for a few minutes, but their ghost shirts did not avail them. They saw their comrades fall on every side, they heard the shouts of the soldiers as they pressed them from every side, and finally they turned and sought safety in flight. Lieutenant Parker did not draw his sword from the time he started until the bugle sounded the recall. He used his revolver, and those who knew him said he was a very passable shot. The Hotchkiss guns got the range of the ravine when they saw the Indians escaping that way. They fired two-pound explosive shells at the rate of fifty a minute, cutting down everything that was

alive. In a few minutes there were two hundred men, women and children lying dead and wounded on the ground, the tepees had been torn down by shells, some of them were burning above the helpless wounded, and the surviving handful of Sioux were flying in a wild panic to the shelter of the ravine. Sixty soldiers were also lying on the ground, which shows how hard the Indians fought at the beginning of the battle.

Lieutenant Parker did not try to hold in his horse when he got fairly out of the ravine. The animal had never been in action before, but he seemed to delight in the whistling of balls and the roaring of cannon. Whenever Parker saw an Indian he pulled on him, and whenever he missed, it is sure that the boy who followed close at his side did *not* miss with his Winchester. They followed the Sioux for a mile or more, and then the lieutenant heard the sound of the bugle. It was the recall, and he forthwith returned his empty revolver to its holster and shouted to the men who were nearest to him.

“Cease firing!” he yelled. “Don’t you

hear the bugle sounding a recall? How did you work it, Murphy?" he added, turning to a soldier who had oftentimes told him that he would not take any prisoners. "Did you see any drop?"

"To be sure I did, sir," said he. "I thought 'Remember Custer' all the time I was doing it. Halloo, there's one. I guess I will fix him so that he won't kill any more soldiers."

Murphy stopped in front of a wounded Sioux, who raised on his elbow and looked at him with a countenance full of vindictive fury. He was shot through both legs, and of course he fell to the ground. The soldier felt all over his person but could not find a cartridge left.

"No matter," said he, throwing himself off his horse. "You've got a knife there, and I can soon put you out of the way with that."

"Hold on, Murphy; that won't do," said Parker. "Get back on your horse and let him go."

"If I don't kill him somebody else will," said the soldier, very much disappointed to

hear this order. "He is good for all the men who can get around him. See that?" he added, sticking the muzzle of his carbine into the warrior's face.

The brave proved that if his legs were shot through his hands were all right, for he seized the gun and tried to draw the soldier toward him. If he had got him within reach of the knife he held in his hand, he would have struck him down without mercy.

"Don't you think he ought to be killed after that?" inquired Murphy.

"We are not here to make war upon crippled Indians," said Lieutenant Parker decidedly. "Disarm him and let him go."

Now, to Carl it seemed as if it was a matter of some importance to take away the Indian's knife. One of his race, when he becomes frightened and can run, gets as frightened as anybody; but when he is wounded so badly that he is brought to a standstill, he becomes really a dangerous foe. He will fight as long as he has strength left to draw a weapon. The soldier advanced toward him, but his knife was raised in the most threatening man-

ner. But Murphy was equal to the emergency. In an instant his carbine was poised in the air; the blow descended, beating down the Indian's guard and landing with its full force on his unprotected head. He was stretched out as dead, apparently, as any of the Indians that surrounded him. His muscles grew rigid, he sank back upon the ground, and the eyes which had gazed so ferociously at his assailant became glazed.

"Well, you have killed him now, at all events," said the lieutenant in disgust.

"Oh no, sir," said Murphy. "It takes more than one little whack like that to kill an Indian. He will come out all right. Here's his knife, sir—as a present from me," he continued, taking off his hat and giving the weapon to Parker. "Hold on a minute and I will get you his scabbard."

The Indian was too far gone to make any resistance as he took the sheath and belt off, and presenting them to Lieutenant Parker, he mounted his horse and rode back with him to the camp.

CHAPTER XXX.

OFF FOR HOME.

“**H**URRY up there, sir. The colonel is anxious to get all his men in. We are going to have a blizzard.”

It was Colonel Forsyth's bugler who hailed them. He was going over the field in a gallop, blowing his trumpet as he went, in hope of getting his men all in camp before the storm struck them. The lieutenant stopped in surprise and looked all around him. Sure enough, there was a blizzard coming. The air was filled with fine snow which he had not noticed before; and, now that he began to get over his excitement, he found that his summer blouse afforded him but a poor protection against the wind that was blowing. They put their horses into a lope in obedience to the order; but, fast as they went, Lieutenant Parker took notice of the havoc that was done by the Hotchkiss guns during the twenty

minutes that the fight continued. He saw that there were about as many women dead as there were men, and that some of them held repeating rifles in their hands.

"That beats me," said he, in profound astonishment. "The squaws meant to fight, too."

"You will always find that the case when troops attack a home camp," said Carl. "Some of these women are wounded. They will freeze to death during this blizzard."

"That fight was a massacre and nothing else," said Parker in disgust. "Why could not the women have kept out of the way?"

"Well, I suppose every man on our side was thinking 'Remember Custer' while that fight took place, sir," said Murphy, in a tone which showed that he did not care anything for the Indians, so long as they were dead. "I know I did, and I don't believe that any Sioux that I pulled on got away."

The wind continued to increase in fury—so much so that the notes of the bugle from the trumpeter who had warned them, and which he continued to blow at intervals, came

but faintly to their ears. Lieutenant Parker was getting cold, but he did not say a word about it. His overcoat was left on the ground where the cavalry began its charge, and if the colonel did not have anything further for him to do he would be glad to put that overcoat on. When they arrived within sight of Colonel Forsyth's headquarters they found that the men who had been recalled by the sound of the bugle were busy tearing down the tents and carrying them into the ravine out of reach of the blizzard, and the rest were working like beavers to take their dead and wounded comrades to the same place of refuge. The officers were working with the men, and if they said anything at all, it was to urge those who were laboring with them to hurry a little faster.

"You are just the man I wanted to see, Parker," said his colonel, as he galloped up. "Hitch your horses there in the gully, and then you and Murphy get a stretcher and bring in every man who lost his life during that fight. Be in a hurry, now, for we don't want to leave them out in this wind."

"Carl, you go and get our overcoats and bring one for Murphy," said Parker, as they rode away to obey this order. "We can't work fast enough to keep warm in this wind."

"The colonel wants us to bring in every man who lost his life during the fight," said Carl. "He did not say anything about the Indians, did he?"

"Nary time, sir," said Murphy, indignantly. "The Indians brought it all on themselves, and they can stay there and freeze to death for all the colonel cares."

"Another thing," said the lieutenant—"have you forgotten what that warrior did back there on the prairie? Some of the wounded may have a knife or a rifle, you know, and it would not be safe to go near them."

In a few minutes all our three friends, with their heavy overcoats and gauntlet gloves on, were working hard to bring the bodies of their comrades to the ravine where they would be out of the way of the blizzard, and as fast as the men came in they were dispatched to help them. The lieutenant was astonished when he

saw how the Indians had used their revolvers at the beginning of the fight. They had their pistols and knives hidden under their blankets. Every one of them went in armed, and that was the reason they did so much damage. Some of the Indians and soldiers were almost touching each other, having fired their guns when so close together that their garments were fairly burned with the powder, and of course it was not possible for one to miss so large a mark at that distance. The soldiers did not seem to care a cent for the presence of the officers who were on the spot to superintend their operation. If they took hold of a soldier to place him on a stretcher and an Indian was in the way, they kicked him roughly aside, as they would have done with any other rubbish. The officers noticed it but did not say anything; and as long as they ranked Parker, he did not feel called upon to say anything, either.

“If I had my way they would treat brave men with a little more respect than that,” said Parker, as they picked up a soldier who had been placed upon the stretcher and started

for the ravine with him. "If those men had not been brave they would not have killed so many of our fellows."

"Humph!" muttered Murphy. "They were fighting for their homes, you know, sir. Plague take all their homes. They have got a reservation, and why don't they go there and stay upon it? If all the soldiers could have their way, there would not be one left on the prairie."

Lieutenant Parker was beginning to feel as Carl, the Trailer, did while he was explaining the Ghost Dance to him. He felt that the Indians had been abused, and wished there was some way in which the matter could be arranged to everybody's mutual satisfaction. But then it would have been of no use to argue the case with Murphy. Like all soldiers he had his own opinion, and he would keep on having it until all the Indians had been wiped out.

At last, when the blizzard was at its height and the soldiers could scarcely see which way to go, the bugle called them in; and when they got into the ravine all the tents were up,

and the property they had left on the field when they began their charge was there under cover. It was delightful to feel the fire once more. Their overcoats were frozen stiff, and it was a long time before they got thawed out again. The storm lasted three days, and a severe one it was, too. A soldier would scarcely stick his head out of his tent before he was glad to get back by the fire again. Some of the wounded soldiers died during this time, and with everyone who breathed his last among his comrades fierce maledictions went up on all Indians who were left on the plains.

"I have always said 'Remember Custer' when I went into an engagement of this kind," said an old soldier, wiping the tears from his eyes and turning to Lieutenant Parker, who had come into the hospital tent just in time to see a wounded man breathe his last, "but from now on I shall yell 'Remember Simpson.' He met his death like a brave man."

"Was he shot?" asked Parker, who knew he ought to say something to show that he sympathized with the soldier.

“No, sir. He shot that brave down, and thought he had him sure enough ; but he had a knife, with which he struck Simpson in the side. My rifle was loaded, and I will bet you he did not hurt anybody after that. Oh yes, I shall always remember Simpson.”

On the morning of the fourth day after the blizzard the sun rose bright and clear, and the work of burying the dead Indians began. All hands were turned out for that purpose. Some dug a ditch large enough to hold them all, and the rest were sent out to gather up the men, women and children, some lying at least two miles away, and bring them to the grave. The unfeeling soldiers dumped them into the trench like so many sticks of wood, while Lieutenant Parker and Carl stood by with their hands clenched and their teeth shut firmly against each other. If Parker had been in command of that squad they would have handled the Indians with much more respect.

The lieutenant noticed that more than half the Indians were stripped when they arrived at the trench ; but the officers, although they

saw it, did not make any remark. What the soldiers wanted as much as anything else was to secure the ghost shirts on which so much depended, and these they had taken off when they first found the Indians and stowed away under their overcoats. He gave up all hope of getting one of these ghost shirts; but that night, when the officers were all in their tents preparing to smoke, after supper, Carl came to the door and called him out. He went, and was presented with one of the ghost shirts that the medicine man had blessed, and which was to render the soldiers weak and powerless.

“I knew you would not have a chance to get one with those officers all around you, and so I went off and got this myself,” said Carl. “See there. That is the place where the bullet went in, and you can see how much resistance the shirt offered to it. He might as well have gone into the fight with nothing on at all.”

The next day this work was done and the Indians were buried; but the work of the cavalry was not yet over. They were ordered

away in haste to help a company of buffalo soldiers (negroes) who were coming into the agency with a train load of supplies. But this fight did not last long. The cavalry charged the Indians as soon as they caught sight of them, and ran them off to the hills. They did not lose a man, but the Sioux lost four warriors and several ponies. And so it was during the three weeks they stayed there, and it was not until January that they received orders to go to the fort.

"I have learned something since I have been here," said the lieutenant, when the soldiers were fairly under way to go to their post. "I did not know why they called this battle 'Wounded Knee,' but now I know. There is an agency a few miles up the creek called Wounded Knee, and it is situated on a stream of the same name. Everything is Wounded Knee up this way."

"Say, Parker, I will tell you what I have been thinking of for the last few days," said Carl. "Do you think you behaved yourself in that fight so that the colonel will give you leave of absence for a week?"

"What are you up to?" asked Parker, who knew that Carl had made up his mind to go somewhere, and that he wanted the lieutenant to go with him. "Where are you going?"

"I am going out to my house to see how the fellows there came out during the war," said Carl. "They don't know that the war is ended, and there may have been some raiders who went up to the ranch from Standing Rock Agency."

"I'll ask the colonel," said Parker, who was delighted with the thought of being free from all military duty for the time he had mentioned. "I have been here eighteen months, and I have never asked for a furlough. I think he will let me go."

"Well, when we get back to the fort we will wait a little while until the excitement dies out, and when I tip you the wink, you go and see him."

But Carl did not wait as long as he thought he was going to. On the next night but one they came within sight of the stockade, and Carl was thunderstruck and alarmed, too, when one of the officers pointed out to him a large

herd of cattle that were feeding close by the fort. Something told him whose cattle those were, and it took him but a few minutes to ride up and look at the brand on their flanks. The herd belonged to him, but he could not see signs of any herdsmen who had come there with them."

"Those are some of my cattle," said he to Parker when he rode up beside him, "but how in the world did they come down here? That captain the colonel left here to command the post during his absence is a brick. He has some of the teamsters and soldiers out there to see that they don't stray away. I am going home this very night."

"Not alone, are you?" said Parker, becoming alarmed in his turn. "You may find some Indians there who have left your ranch a pile of ruins."

"I have to go, at any rate. I will speak to the colonel before I leave. If he has a mind to send a company of men out there with me _____"

"Ask for Company D," said Parker.

"It isn't likely that he will give me a

chance to ask for any company, but I shall be glad to have one."

Carl rode off to hunt up the colonel, who had by this time dismounted in front of his quarters, who listened in surprise when he told him of the discovery he had made. He did not hesitate a minute, but called to his adjutant to start off Company D, as soon as they had time to refresh themselves and horses, to see what had been going on at Carl's ranch.

"It is a pity, Carl, that they took this time to raid you," said the colonel. "But I will do what I can to get your cattle back and punish the fellows who had a hand in it."

"It is all right," said Carl, who was sitting on his horse at the rear of the column. "You will get your orders in a few minutes."

"Bully for the colonel," said Parker, never once turning his eyes toward the speaker.

Company D was drawn up in line all ready to be dismissed, but the adjutant ordered them a few paces to the front and directed them to move off on the right and come to a front again. The line closed up and the

other companies broke ranks, and then the adjutant repeated the colonel's order, after which this company was also dismissed, and started to take their horses to the stable.

"What's up, sir?" whispered Murphy.

"Those are my cattle out there, and we are going up to see what has become of those fellows who had charge of them," said Carl, who did not speak as he usually did. "I am afraid the Sioux have bounced them."

"Whoopee!" said Murphy. "Here goes for another fight with the Indians!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

CONCLUSION.

CARL was very much depressed when he went into the teamsters' quarters to get his supper. The men wanted to talk about the battle, but Carl wanted some information about his cattle. How long had they been there? Did anybody come with them? And did they run as though they were very much frightened about something? The teamsters answered these questions as well as they could, but they were certain about two things: nobody had been seen with the cattle when they came up, and they were running as though they had made up their minds not to stop until they reached the Mississippi River. But they were easily controlled, and the men who had been sent after them had no trouble at all in driving them back to the fort.

“Now, Carl, tell us something more about

the fight," said one of the teamsters. "How did Lieutenant Parker behave, any way?"

"He acted as though there was not an Indian within a hundred miles of him," answered Carl with animation. "He let his horse take his own way, and never stopped until we were a mile away from the camp."

"Did he kill any Indians?"

"Every time I saw him pull on an Indian, he dropped. But he saved one Sioux from being killed, and that's one thing I didn't like about him."

While Carl was engaged in telling this story about the Indian who was shot through both legs and had a knife left with which to defend himself, the bugle sounded, and that was something that Carl delighted to hear. He hurried out to get his horse, and when he came back the men were all drawn up in line and the captain was listening to some parting instructions from the colonel.

"If you see any signs of the Sioux out there, you will follow them up until you are certain that they go on their reservation," said he. "Carl, I hope it is not as bad as you think,"

he added, turning to the young scout, who came up at that moment. "A boy who behaved as you did in the fight don't deserve to have his ranch raided. Good luck to you."

In a few minutes more the column, headed by Carl and the captain, were out of the gate, and the darkness shut them out from view. For miles they travelled at a fast walk, and not a word was said by anybody in the ranks. Finally Carl, who had been watching his horse for some time, stopped his own nag and reached out and touched the captain on the shoulder. There was somebody coming, and he was coming fast, too. In a few seconds more he caught sight of two or three hats which were bobbing back and forth in front of the horizon, and in response to the captain's challenge they hauled up very suddenly.

"Halt! Who comes there?" asked the captain.

"Halt yourself," answered a voice; and Carl was almost ready to yell when he recognized that Thompson was speaking to them. "You are soldiers, ain't you? Have you seen any cattle down this way?"

"Thompson!" cried Carl.

"Well, I declare; if there ain't Carl," said Thompson, so delighted that he could scarcely speak. "Where have you been?"

"I have been in a fight, but I am all here yet," said Carl, riding forward to shake his men by the hand. "How did those cattle manage to get away from you?"

"You have been in a fight, have you?" said Thompson, so overjoyed to see Carl again that he could hardly let him go. "Well, you haven't been in any worse one than we have. We've killed nine Indians, and have a prisoner up there to show you."

"A prisoner? Who is it?"

"It is Harding—that is who it is. He came out to the ranch with twenty-five Indians to gather up some stock, and we were too many for him. He stampeded some of the cattle, but we whipped the Indians and drove them away."

"That is the same thing he proposed to me while I was a prisoner," said Carl, turning to the captain. "I knew that if I gave him an order on Thompson for the stock he would be

killed when he presented it. Well, he helped me to escape once, and you can help him this time."

"Not by a long shot!" exclaimed the captain. "General Miles has ordered every soldier in his department to arrest that fellow, and he will have to go to the fort with me."

"That is what I say, captain," said Thompson. "He tried to rob our safe, too."

"We will go back to the fort now and report to the colonel," added the captain. "If he chooses to send us up there to-morrow, why we will get him. What are you going to do with your men, Carl?"

"They will go to the fort with us and be ready to come back with the cattle to-morrow. The soldiers and teamsters rounded them up for you, and I guess they are all there," he continued, addressing himself to Thompson. "I am surprised at you," he continued, when the captain had brought the men around and headed them toward the fort. "I am sorry I told you so much."

"Now, Carl, see here," said Thompson, lowering his voice almost to a whisper. "You

need not have him captured unless you want to."

"How shall we prevent it? The colonel will send some men to the ranch to-morrow, and when they get their hands on him he is booked for the military prison at Leavenworth."

"Look here," said Thompson, lowering his voice so that no one but Carl could hear it. "I have six men with me, and how does this captain know but I have a hundred? Send Bert back and tell him to escape. I'll bet you that they won't see him after that."

It would seem from this that Carl kept the ranchmen posted on everything that happened to him at the fort. When he came home after his captivity among the Sioux, he told them all that occurred to him—how Harding had threatened to shoot him because of the death of Sitting Bull, but had suddenly grown merciful to him when he saw that the Indians were determined to have revenge on him, and how he had assisted him to keep out of their way. Thompson felt kinder toward Harding after that, and so did all the herds-

men; and when they found that Carl was anxious to have him escape, there was not one man who had a word to say against it.

“Well, go and tell Bert to come here,” said Carl, after thinking a moment. “You know what sort of a guard he is under, don’t you? Now you tell him how you will arrange it.”

Thompson reined in his horse, and was gone but a few moments when he rode up again with Bert at his side. In a few whispered words he told Bert just what he had to do, and he understood it. He was pulling up his horse to let the column get a little in advance of him, when Carl said earnestly:

“Tell him that this is the last time I shall befriend him. He helped me to escape once when I stood a chance of being staked out, and now I have paid him back. If he ever gets into trouble with the soldiers again, he will have to stand the result of his misdeeds.”

The captain did not know how many men were with Thompson, and consequently he did not miss one of their number, who was going at his best pace toward the ranch to warn the squawman that the soldiers were

coming to-morrow to arrest him. As Thompson had said, "You would not see him very much after that." If he once got out of that ranch and felt a good horse under him, he would kill him before he would ever be found in that department again.

The column pursued their way at an easy gait, and when they came within sight of the cattle, Thompson and his men went down to relieve the teamsters and soldiers who had been keeping guard over them, and the rest rode on into the fort. Some few of the teamsters were awake as Carl went in, and wanted to know all about it; but the young scout told them that the Sioux had been whipped, and had made their way back to their reservation.

The next morning Carl arose at an early hour, but his cattle were nowhere in sight. Thompson had routed his men up as soon as they could see their way clearly, and had started the cattle back toward home. Carl now wanted to see the colonel. He wanted to know if there was anything for him to do, otherwise he desired to go home and look after things there. But the colonel did not

appear until near breakfast time; then, the captain having made his report to him, he sent for Carl. He said that he was perfectly willing that Carl should go and stay as long as he wanted to, but that Harding must be brought back.

"Your men have got him where they can hold him, have they?" asked the commander. "He is a mighty slippery fellow, and if he sees the least chance to get away he is going to improve it. I had him here in the fort once, and how he got away beats me. I will send a sergeant and four men with you to take him."

"Very good, sir," said Carl. He did not say that the men would find him there, for he was quite sure they would not. He waited until the men got ready and then mounted his horse, which he had ridden during the fight, and started off on the trail of the cattle. In about three hours they overtook them. Thompson was bringing up the rear, and his face was all wrinkled up with smiles when he caught sight of the sergeant and four soldiers.

"Say," said he, "when you get that fellow

I want you to hold fast to him. This is the second time he has bothered me, and I ain't agoing to put up with it much longer."

They had a long way to go, and late in the afternoon they came within sight of the ranch. There was no one there to receive them, but Carl did not mind that. He showed the soldiers where to put their horses, for they were going to stay with him all night, and then led the way into the hall.

"I suppose you want to see Harding the first thing you do," said he. "Well, he is in the office here—— Why, what in the world does this mean?"

He had come to the door of the office, but it was wide open. The key was on the outside, and the window was open, too. There was the shakedown in which the squawman had spent the first night of his captivity, but that was the only thing they saw of him.

"He has escaped!" said Carl; and one, to have seen him, would have thought that it was a matter that crushed him completely.

"Yes, sir, he has escaped," said the cook, who, hearing the sound of their footsteps in

the hall, had come in from the kitchen to see what was the matter, "and I would like to know if anybody ever got away under such circumstances before. We had one man outside here in the hall, and another out by the window. They were cautioned to look out for him, for he was like an eel—a hard fellow to hold. Well, sir, that man outside went away for about five minutes, and when he came back the window was open and Harding was gone. He took Thompson's best horse, too."

"Well, that lets us off," said the sergeant, looking around at the soldiers. "Can't we follow him up and catch him?"

"No," said the cook. "Don't I tell you that he has the best horse on the ranch? Some of the men are out now looking for him. He didn't take to the prairie, but concealed himself in the mountains. He won't come out till he gets among his friends."

The cook spoke so earnestly, and seemed so disgusted over Harding's escape, that the sergeant never thought to blame him for it. If the truth must be told, he was the man who brought the horse and tied him to the bushes

in the yard so that the squawman could readily find him, and he stood in his door and saw Harding leap out of the window, mount the nag, and ride away in the darkness. Some of the men were indeed out, but they were not looking for Harding. They were attending to the cattle.

"I think we will go back and report to the colonel," said the sergeant, after meditating a few moments. "He ought to know that he ain't going to get the man."

And we may add that this was the last adventure that befell Carl while he stayed at the fort. The troops never suspected Carl, and neither did they ever see Harding again. What became of him after that nobody knew. Of course the soldiers were all on the lookout for him, but he disappeared completely. And we may go further, and say that no one on the ranch ever heard of Claude again. A young man with such habits as his don't often turn out to be anybody in the world. If he keeps such company as the two men who attempted to rob Carl of his money, he is probably in State's prison before this time.

The sergeant and all the soldiers were surprised and perplexed over the escape of Harding, and when the horses had had a rest and the men had eaten their supper they set out for the fort. The men stood on the porch and saw them go; and when they had got out of sight the cook turned to Carl, laid one finger alongside his nose, and winked first one eye and then the other. If the sergeant had seen that motion he might have been led to suspect something.

Carl, the Trailer, remained at home for a week, and when he started for the fort again he took a big load from Thompson's mind by telling him that he had seen all the scouting he wanted to see, and that in a few days he was coming home to remain.

"There is no more fight in the Sioux, for, now that Sitting Bull has gone and Big Foot was killed during that fight, there will be no one to take command of them," said Carl. "But first I want to bring the lieutenant up here, to let him see how I live when I am at home. I will come back in a week or two, and I shall never go away again."

The men were all glad to hear that piece of news, and when Carl returned in company with the lieutenant, they extended to him a hearty welcome; for Carl had told his herds-men how he behaved in that fight with the Sioux, and they were glad to shake a brave man by the hand.

"I don't see why you wanted to leave this nice place, where you have everything just as you want it, and come down to the fort to go scouting," said Parker, when he had been shown about the ranch, and supper was over and the men had gathered on the porch. "If I had a ranch like this I would resign in a minute. I never would go on another hunt after Indians."

That was what his men all said, and they were glad to welcome him home. Carl still lives on the plains, but he does not go down to the fort as much as he used to. Time has made changes, and there are but few officers left who knew him as Carl, the Trailer. Parker has now become a captain, and has been ordered to the coast. He keeps up a regular correspondence with Carl; and of all

the stories he has to tell to his younger officers, there are none that he takes so much delight in as those in which the young scout was engaged. The Ghost Dance is a thing of the past. It has never been heard of since Yellow Bird caught up that handful of dust and threw it into the air, which started the massacre of Wounded Knee.

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